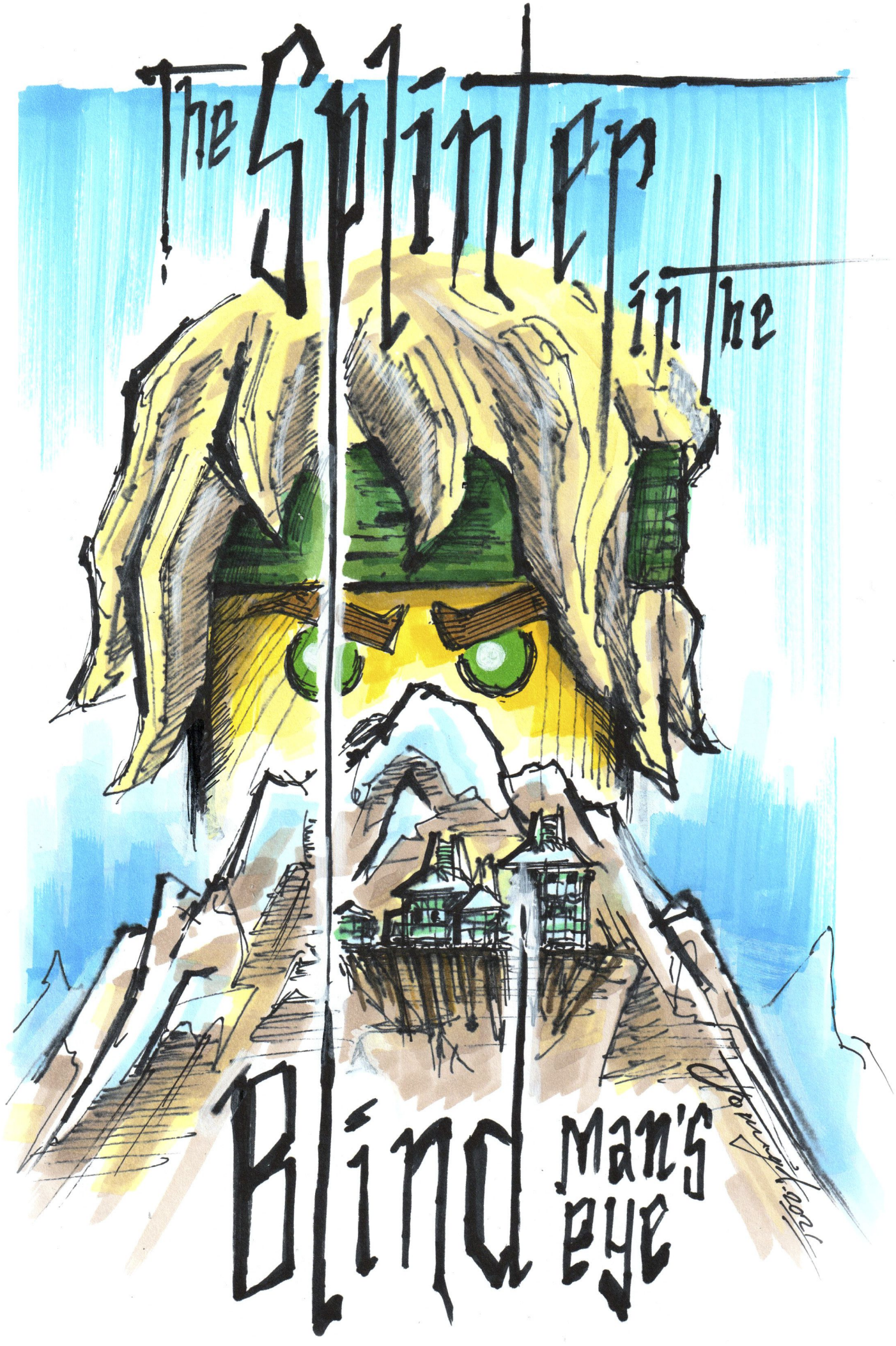



CHAPTER 1

*‘**There is a man in Ninjago.** He lives in an abandoned temple near the peak of the highest mountain. It stubbornly clings to the mountain’s steep snow-clad sides. The wailing winds pummel the time-worn rafters in a continuous battle between the cold, the wind, age, and gravity. Yet still, people go to see him. The journey up the mountain is tough and dangerous. How many lives the climb has claimed thus far, one can only guess. If you encounter one of the visitors by the foot of the mountain, they won’t return your greeting. You may notice a determination (or is it desperation…) in their eyes as they stare into the mist that hides the summit. These people call him – the lone hermit in the temple – THE WISHMASTER, though he goes by many names as his tales are passed from one wanderer to the next. Those who are brave and foolish enough to make the climb only do so when all hope is lost. Drifting through the inns and taverns scattered below the mountain are tall tales and whispers about those who have returned. About how they have changed. About how these lost souls seem to have returned filled with hope and an all-new purpose. But these survivors never once speak about the Wishmaster upon their return home. No one shares the stories of their trials and tribulations faced while up there in the wailing winds. But one thing is for certain: they have changed. Is it worth risking your life for this journey? I would never dare to brave the mountain myself, but I have no doubt it is worth the ascent. If you have nothing to lose, nothing is a very small wager if you can gain everything.’*

Or so the legend goes. There’s no telling just how many times this fabled ghost story has been passed on from one estranged wanderer to the next. But the look in the kind old lady’s eyes who has just passed on the tale once more suggests this tale is one she likes to tell. The distant yet excited gaze in her eyes tells me that she desires to make the climb just as much as the next desperate fool yet knows she wouldn’t make it far. I can’t help but feel just a little sorry for her. We all carry deep and sincere desires that given the chance to make a reality, one would jump straight in at the mere thought. For me, those desires are far more complex and convoluted than those of the average bystander. My life has never quite known the definition of the world ‘normal’, but I suppose destiny has slightly grander plans for you when you’re the grandson of Ninjago’s very creator.

I'll never forget the day it all changed, and I was set on a whole new path in life. The day I stormed Jamanakai Village with nothing but empty threats and ancient folk-lore to strike fear into the residents, demanding candy of all things. The day my now-brothers and teammates hung me up at the mercy of the townsfolk and experienced public humiliation like I never thought possible. We sure have come a long way since then… well, most of us at least. I suppose Jay will always be the same jokester at heart. How – or why – they came around on me and gave me a second chance is beyond me, especially at the rate I was going. Sometimes I think about where I'd be in life right now had I never opened that first Serpentine tomb. Would I have still gone on to become the legendary Green Ninja? Would the Final Battle have still taken place as foretold on the walls of the Temple of Light? Would Ninjago City still be standing at all? The possibilities are endless, though I do not like to plague my thoughts with a reality I will never know, especially when I need to keep myself grounded in both reality and the present now more than ever before.

I look around and find myself completely out of my comfort zone. Inns and taverns have never been an ideal setting, it always feels as if someone has it out for you in places like this. Though I also wouldn't call physical embodiments of entire realms comfort zones either, and at this point, I honestly can't pick which is worse. It's strange. Technically I have been here before, or at very least in this part of Ninjago. Yet my memories of it are incredibly faint, to the point of not being memories at all, rather flashes and glimpses of a time long forgotten. Though one could argue that you shouldn't expect much else with a separate, vengeful entity steering your body around as they see fit. I remember very little of Morro's possession, and honestly, I count that as a blessing. Last thing I need haunting my memories right now is the damage and pain done to my friends and family, all at my own hands. I've never had ample time to sit down and reflect on these experiences, always moving from one fight right to the next. I barely had time to properly mourn the loss of my own father before voyaging out to the Dark Island in search of my mother. Yet I can't help but shake this feeling that I'm missing something in-between, though Jay and Nya are somehow always there to assure me that I'm simply overthinking things. I should probably follow up on that when I get home.

The others know that I'm here, yet don't know why. This journey is one I need to see through on my own, and I know the others well enough by now that there was only one way I could come here alone. I don't necessarily feel good about being indirect with my intentions, but sometimes they can be a little too overprotective. Especially Kai. Sometimes I feel like this wouldn't be the case if I weren't the youngest on the team, even though, by a technicality, P.I.X.A.L. is the youngest by a good decade or so. Yet I'm not so sure the others take the aging of a Nindroid so literally, and perhaps I shouldn't either. Regardless, I had to throw the others well and truly off my scent for this one. Not even Master Wu knows what I'm truly pursuing, and if he does have even the slightest suspicion, he chose not to confront me about it. As far as they know, I'm simply taking some time off the team to deal with the horrific resurrection of my now demon-like father, the revelation that I myself am part Oni and the untimely-death of Harumi. Which, to be fair, isn't exactly a lie in itself. I have a lot to work through right now, and this ascent – while far from the wisest path forward – may be the only way to find what it is I'm looking for. For all I know, this supposed Wishmaster doesn't even exist, and my upcoming climb of Ninjago's tallest mountain will ultimately result in disappointment and desperation. Though after everything I've encountered over the years, from maniacal time travellers to criminal warlords to the embodiment of evil itself, I have no trouble believing in someone capable to granting wishes at this point. Though I swear we've encountered something along those lines before… I really need to consult Master Wu on that at some point, away from Jay and Nya this time I think.

I finish my beverage and thank the bartender for both the drink and the story and prepare for my trek up the mountain. As I stand up from my stool, I equip my backpack and my green cloak, yet am instantly pulled back in by the barkeep. She shares one final piece of ominous advice with me… or maybe it's a warning? Maybe both? Whatever the case, I'm now starting to question whether this journey is one even worth taking, especially on my own.

*'Find no trust nor peace within the wishes of the Wishmaster. Or your only wish will be that you didn't turn back sooner…'*

# CHAPTER 2

***I am mostly happy.*** I think great thoughts sometimes, but I don't say them out loud because when I try, my words come out strange. It's like they want to go back into my mouth. I don't mind much because my words are mine and I care about them. I am lonely though, but I keep busy and that makes me happy. Mostly happy.
Back and forth ... back and forth ... I can see where I've been and where I need to go. I know when my work is over, and I am happy when it is. Not because I don't like my work because I do, but because I know I have done well, and more work will be there waiting for me when I wake up the next morning. I don't mind the cold either. I am cold-blooded and I only eat every 14 days or so. I think that is why my gracious employer keeps me around. Good cheap and reliable! And she even comes to my defence if any of the patrons pick on me. A lot of people don't like Serpentine around these parts, but I don't hold that against them. I have only been back in Ninjago for a few years, and I understand that a lot of bad thing has happened between the Serpentine and the humans. I try not to put too much thought into it. I don't like bad thoughts and whenever my mind goes there I go back and forth, back and forth.

*'OY! YOU MISSED A SPOT!'*
The shout echoed through the dank room but hardly any of the patrons reacted. *'So-so-so-sorry ma'am!'* Clancee replied and hurried over to the dirty spot with his mop. It was not like him to get distracted by his thoughts, but he had been lately. He was lonely and thinking a lot about why his friends had abandoned him. He knew deep inside that he wasn't the most inspiring of company or conversation, but he knew that he and his friends shared a special bond. So why did they leave him? Or rather, why didn't they come back to him? Clancee was not a stranger to loneliness. He had spent 200 years alone recently. Well, not entirely alone but mostly so. Clancee didn't actually know that he had been gone for 200 years. Time didn't have much meaning where he had been, but he knew it had been a very long and lonely time. Lonely because he didn't have his friends there and more so because he did not have a mop. But he did now and he loved it dearly. Or rather, it wasn't really his. It belonged to the tavern, but it was Clancee's best friend and he had named it Moppy. Moppy loved Clancee back. He was sure of it.

The cold and cramped tavern in which he now worked, was a step down from his glory days as a deckhand on the glorious Misfortune's Keep serving under the mighty pirate King Nadakhan. Together they had sailed the Endless Sea and been the proud scourge of Ninjago seaside villages and vessels. Riches never meant anything to Clancee. The camaraderie, the adventure and the rewarding satisfaction of a deck well cleaned was all he craved. And he had friends back then: Flintlocke, who never missed a target with his trusty musket. Doubloon, whose silent companionship filled him with the confidence that silence can indeed be gold and made him feel that it was okay to speak only when he himself had something truly important to say. The mighty Dogshank, who had the heart an angel when she wasn't giving him a much-deserved corporal punishment for a task poorly performed. And of course, Monkey Wretch, who could fix any leak the proud Misfortune's Keep may have suffered in the treacherous waters in Southern Storm belt. Hard work for sure, but good work, time well spent and a deck well cleaned. His master Nadakhan was a demanding captain but deservedly so, and he had kept a tight ship and cared well for his crew.

A chill wind interrupted Clancee's thoughts as the door to the tavern was flung open and a stranger entered. The sudden cold reminded Clancee of that fateful night where his happiness aboard the Misfortune's Keep abruptly ended. It was a stormy and rainy night like many others. The sounds and muzzle flashes of cannons tore open the darkness and dense fog as two ships played a slow but deliberate game of cat and mouse. A night as many others in most aspects. Captain Soto and his ship, the Destiny's Bounty, had been rivals to Nadakhan's place as the undisputed ruler of the Endless Sea for years, but somehow this night did not end with the Destiny's Bounty drifting away with creaking planks and torn sails as usual.
The two ships had crashed together, lines had been thrown and the crew of the Bounty had entered Misfortune's Keep. A bold and unusual move since the crews had rarely faced off in crew-to-crew combat. Sword clashed, musket shots rang and Clancee had held his own against No Eyed Pete and his loud-mouthed parrot. With a sweep back and forth he had brought Pete crashing to the deck (a meticulously cleaned and maintained one). But it was then he heard the laughter. Shrill and gloating it felt like

it silenced the storm around them. When he turned, he saw is captain frozen with an expression of utter confusion painted across his otherwise confident face. No ... he wasn't exactly frozen but he moved very slowly and before him stood Captain Soto with a wide grin and a small flask in his hand.
*'The Tiger Widow lass sends 'er regards'* he boasted as he reached around to his back and produced a golden teapot. '*This be The Teapot of Tyrahn ... Legend says, it be crafted o' the gold o' the Golden Peaks and forged at the Temple of Light by the First Spinjitzu Master he'selves.'*
Clancee watched in terror as a lighting bolt illuminated the strange scene and Captain Soto kept monologuing.
*'I myself doubt that be the truth, an' I might 'ad sold it off for a pretty coin, hadn't it been that I be needin' it meself. But be so as it may, I shall put it to good use! My esteemed rival of the Endless Sea! I be afraid you' days as royalty be comin' to an end! If this is a teapot, GET IN IT!'*
Clancee had always know that his captain was not from Ninjago, but the sight of him drifting into the spout of the teapot while his bellowing scream was quenched to nothing but a high-pitched squeak had chilled even his cold-blooded spine and made him consider for the first time where Djinns came from and exactly what they were. What was more: as soon as Nadakhan had disappeared into the teapot, Flintlocke's impeccable aim was off and Dogshank's strength dwindled. The fight was over...

There was something else which had disturbed Clancee this night and made him sweep with less grace than he would normally take so much pride in. The stranger asking questions and had engaged in a long conversation with old Gertrude. She would speak with anyone who spent coin in her bar, but this was not an anybody. This was Lloyd Montgomery Garmadon, the fabled Green Ninja. Nobody else here seemed to know, but Clancee knew this all too well because they had met before on the Dark Island. Clancee watched him closely for a good half hour while mopping as much as his focus allowed him. As Lloyd stood up and left, Clancee knew exactly where he was going: to see the WISHMASTER like his friends had. And he would follow. He looked over a Gertrude and stuttered a quiet apology. Goodbyes are always painful. He gave Moppy a big hug, rested her against the door frame and walked out alone into the wailing winds.

# CHAPTER 3

***I keep having these strange,*** surreal glimpses of a luscious, prestigious world far beyond that of Ninjago. A world I've never been to, yet one that feels so familiar. One I have absolutely no prior knowledge of, yet one I feel I have voyaged to only very recently. It's frustratingly tough to remember even the slightest detail of whatever these flashes are. One second, I remember a peaceful, vibrant green landscape that covered miles and miles of ground, further then the eye could see. The next, my eyes are pulled up to the deep, mesmerising blue skies, filled to the brim with clouds unlike anything I have ever seen. Between these clouds lay floating sections of the landscape, yet are occupied far too high up for anyone to reach. I remember a gentle and comfortable breeze filling the air, one that graced my surroundings with golden flower petals. Something so divine and so mystical, being manifested right in the palm of my hand. Every time these glimpses become even just a little clearer, it's like they cease to exist entirely only a short amount of time later. Like my mind has become an endless cycle of a world not known to anyone but myself, and every time I begin to see through the mysterious mists within my head, a new, blurry glimpse presents itself, and just like that, I'm right back at square one. What is it that I'm not remembering? What is it that my mind is burying so deep that it has become a mental toll to remember even just the slightest detail of?

I feel as if my mind is at constant war with itself. If it isn't these memories keeping me from sleeping at night, it's the night my father was brought back from the dead, and I did everything within my power to help him remember who he truly was. That night in Kryptarium Prison, where his powers were far stronger then I had ever seen them before. The night the Green Ninja lost the fight, and the Sons of Garmadon had won. The night my own father claimed he had no son. These memories-turned-nightmares have just about broken my very spirit, and have made it near-impossible to be the protector of Ninjago I am destined to be. Even now, only shortly after the defeat of the Oni, I fear for my father's eventual return. While we may be on steady ground for the time being, I'll never place my trust in that of which is only a mere twisted shadow of the good man my father once was. For the past so many weeks now, I haven't been able to close my eyes without reliving some traumatic past experience from my life as the Green Ninja. Some nights, I'll be staring straight

into Harumi's eyes, standing on the canals of Ninjago City. It all seems peaceful and serine, until the moment I'm warped onto one of Ninjago's tallest skyscrapers, and am forced to watch Harumi's plumet time and time again. Sometimes I wonder if this is what I deserve. For being the one responsible for unleashing the Serpentine back onto Ninjago all those years ago. Is this my karma? My ultimate punishment for playing a vital role in the Devourer's rampage upon Ninjago City? No matter how many lives I save, nothing will change how many were lost on that day…

Some nights I'll dream of Harumi, others I'll dream of a series of horrific events that have plagued my mind for far too long. My father sacrificing his own life in the Corridor of Elders, while I'm left helpless, forced to be the one to banish him to the Cursed Realm. The Overlord imprisoning me in a small, claustrophobic space, draining my Golden Power from my body. Being left to burn in the boiling pits of the Temple of Fire. Being abandoned at a dangerous, degrading boarding school at such a young age. Battling the Overlord while my friends and family fell to his dark influence. The list goes on and on, but none haunt me more than that of Morro's possession. The things I was forced to do without the slightest ounce of control. The nightmares I was forced to witness within his mind. The absolute and utterly powerless and helpless state of not being able to do a thing while your hands are responsible for the bringing of pain and suffering… it's enough to keep anyone from sleeping at night. Ultimately, I'm praying that this ascent will provide some much-needed closure to the things that keep me up at night, and that once this journey has reached its conclusion, my doubts on whether or not I am able to fulfil the role of the Green Ninja will be laid to rest.

It's been just under an hour since leaving the tavern now, and I've finally reached the base of the mountain. Looking all the way up to the legendary Blind Man's Eye, I only now realise the unimaginable ascent that lays ahead of me. I'm starting to think I've slightly underestimated just how high the Wailing Alps reaches. Before I left, I remember Zane saying it was something along the lines of 'three leagues and twenty-eight fathoms', though it looks significantly taller in person. Last time we were here, the others were at least equipped with a series of mechs that greatly aided their ascent. To his credit, even Morro had the bright idea of using Nya's old Samurai X suit to make the climb a

lot less strenuous. I asked P.I.X.A.L. if she would be able to start designing a new mech for this mission, and to her credit, she didn't hesitate to start building it up. Yet it would take far too long for it to be completed, and I don't have much time to waste.

The kind barkeep informed me that several camping sites and tents had been planted along the mountain path, set up by those who made the climb before me. Whether they are still occupied or not is a different story, yet my gut tells me I won't be encountering too many faces on this journey. If the whispers that have circled back through the handful of travellers who have survived the climb are true, I may not return the same young man I am, rather one uplifted from night terrors and endless flashes of pain and agony. This journey is one I've both needed and wanted to take for some time now, specifically when Master Wu was lost to time. Though at that time, both the team and Ninjago needed me to be the grounded master I vowed to become. Master Wu was gone, Cole was experiencing his own personal struggles, P.I.X.A.L. was no where to be seen… it felt like we had fallen apart as a team. So, I put my journey on hold, and instead focused on fulfilling my role as the Green Ninja once more. Now that Master Wu is home and is back to his same-old self, my temporary absence won't be felt as much by the rest of the team. We haven't exactly been up to much since the Oni's defeat anyway, and with all that has occurred over the past few months, this time away is needed now more then ever.

Realising I am stalling from beginning the ascent, I pull up the hood from the back of my cloak, hopefully preventing my hair from blowing in my face during the climb. I check my newly acquired golden blade gifted to me by Wu, making sure it's up to the task of dealing with any potential threats atop the mountain. I place my blade back in its holster and take one final look at the remote village before embarking on one of, if not, my most perilous quest yet. Though something catches my eye before my departure. It's hard to make out with complete confidence, but I see what I believe is a trail of footprints laid deep in the snow right behind my own. If somebody is deciding to follow me on this journey, then I wish them the best of luck, as this particular journey is one that will test even my fate.

I look ahead at the mountain and commence my ascent, wondering just how long it will take me to reach my destination of the Hanging Temple.

# CHAPTER 4

***The mountain is enormous.*** The wind tears the skin of the impossibly small figure fighting its way upwards.
His name is Lloyd Montgomery Garmadon. He is not yet ten summers old, but he carries a burden as big as the mountain he braves. He is the son of Garmadon, the notorious Lord who returned from the Underworld and led an army of Skulkin in pursuit of the weapons which created this land. It turned out, however, that he was not really after the weapons after all. He was after the power they held when they were brought together, and he used a former disgraced warlord, the four-armed Skulkin general Samukai as a tool to force open a rift to a realm other than Ninjago. And then he just left. Lloyd has never met his father, but he knows of his legend, and in his dreams he has had conversations with him for years. At least he thinks it is dreams ... Most of the time. Some mornings when he woke up in his room in Darkley's Boarding School for Bad Boys, he was convinced that his father had actually spoken to him. But he is not at Darkley's anymore. He is struggling his way up the Glacier Barrens and he is determined to become like his father. Someone who is in control of his own destiny.
Lloyd is not exactly sure why he is making his way up this mountain. Maybe it is because his mother had mentioned this place in one of the many letters she had been sending him over the years. He loved getting those letters. They were filled with adventure and new knowledge of the world. But they never held any of the answers he was so desperately hoping for and Lloyd always read them with resentment. Why was whatever she was doing so important? Why was he paying a price he did not understand?
So, here he was in the cold looking for answers and there was one right in front of him. As he brushed away the snow it became clear to him that he had found one of the legendary Serpentine tombs. It had been sitting there in the snow undisturbed for well over thirty years and now all he had to do was to pull the snake shaped handle and finally take control over his own destiny. But destiny has a way of making it hard on you, and moments later Lloyd found himself tumbling head first into darkness. His eyes had yet to fully adjust when he heard the hypnotic sizzling sound slowly creep up on him. It felt like a dream... or a nightmare? Whatever it was it would shape his destiny forever. For good or bad.

***It would be dark soon.*** Lloyd shook away the thoughts of his younger self and looked towards the summit. It was only visible in fleeting moments when a generous hole in the clouds allowed a bit of sky to escape through. How many hours had it been? It didn't matter much in this terrain. Lloyd started scanning the landscape for an outcropping were he might find some shelter and tuck in for the night. He looked back from where he had come. His footprints had already been swept away by the wind. The feeling of being followed had only returned to him a few times during his ascent and he was now convinced that it had only been his imagination.

***From afar Clancee watched the cloaked figure stop*** and seek refuge from the wind behind a dune of snow. He had to keep close. There were no footprints to follow, almost like his target was a floating ghost or his footsteps had been swept away by a giant unseen mop. The sun was setting fast and Clancee knew that he had the odds stacked against him. He could not lose sight of Lloyd for even a second or he may be lost to the darkness forever. He breathed a silent sigh of relief as he saw a faint golden glow. Lloyd had turned on a light and at least now there was something to keep both of them company in the darkness. As Clancee sat down to watch the flicker of the golden glow, his thoughts returned to his friends and how they had found themselves back in Ninjago after their exile ... or rather in a new exile. On a Dark Island. A ghost who went by the name of Clouse had brought them there. Clancee had seen some strange things in his time, his former master had been a Djinn after all, but he had never encountered a ghost before. An evil one at that with a strong will of his own and magical powers to boot. Clancee and the rest of the crew had been dumbstruck. 200 years and then the first thing you encounter is a ghost who wants you to do his bidding no questions asked. Flintlocke immediately opposed the ghost's proposition. He was not about to make himself vulnerable by serving another master whose powers he did not understand. But Clouse would have none of it and with a casual hand gesture he demonstrated just why it would be wise not to fight that which you don't understand. Any pirate's greatest fear is a watery grave, and as he magically lifted his up henchmen to be and slowly lowered them down into a watery grave with starfish nibbling at their feet, their fighting spirit quickly waned

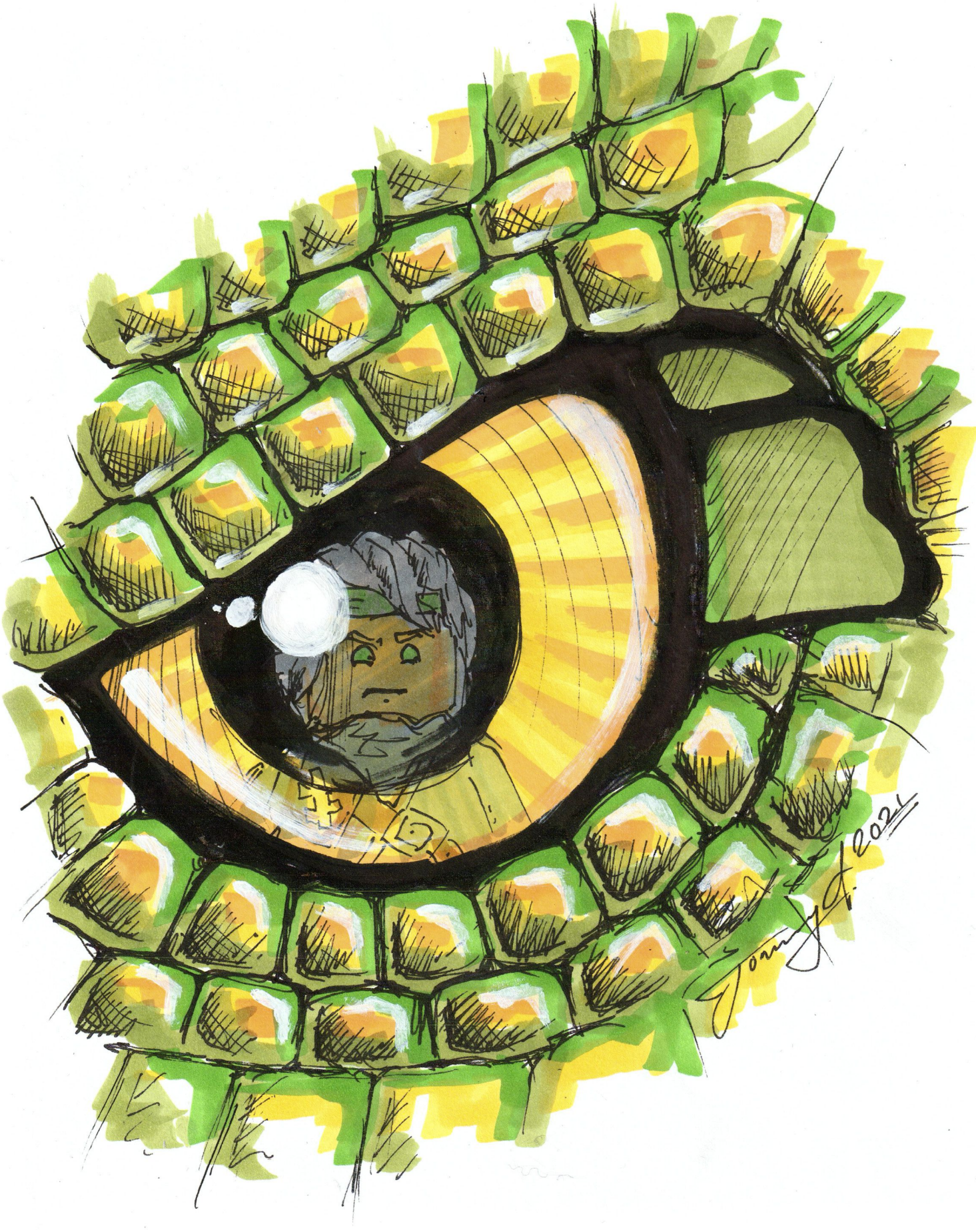
and the deal to work under Clouse was struck. There was no promise of adventure and riches like in the glory days serving the mighty Nadakhan. Only labour and tasks which purpose was never explained. As Monkey Wretch set about to build machines which would be powered by a strange dark substance, the others were given an unexpected surprise: The Misfortune's Keep.
Clouse had somehow recovered it from a place called Gypsy's Cove. It must have ended up there after the battle with Soto. Clancee had thought to himself, that Clouse could simply have told the crew that he had the ship and no other display of force to persuade would have been necessary. After all, the crew's favourite shanty told everything about their feelings for that sturdy vessel. Clancee start humming it quietly to himself:

I'd trade all the ggg-gold that we have reaped,

I'd trade all the ggg-gold that we have reaped,

I'd trade all the ggg-gold that we have reaped,
for one more cold night on ***Misfortune's Keeeeeee ....***

There was a green flash and Clancee felt a sharp pain shoot up his spine as he was thrust backwards into the freezing snow. His head was buzzing. As he stared into one furious pair of glowing green eyes, he realized that he had been caught up in his memories and had bellowed out the ship's name in song.
*'WHO ARE YOU! WHY ARE YOU FOLLOWING ME?'*
Lloyd's voice sounded different from when he had first encountered him on the Dark Island and Clancee did not recall him having those piercing green eyes.
*'Pppppleeeaase! I-I-I mean you no harm!',* Clancee gasped. Lloyd's demeanour changed immediately, and the green glow faded from his eyes. '*I know you! You! That snake guy! The one who worked for Clouse! What are you doing in Ninjago!?! WE MADE A DEAL!'* His eyes lit up again.
This was correct. After their defeat on the Dark Island there had been some debate as to what would happen next. It was clear to the Ninja's Master Wu that the scrappy crew had not been acting on their own initiative and that Clouse had been pulling the strings.
A deal had been struck: Clancee and his friends would go free... as long as they agreed to remain on the Dark Island. Yet here he was on a snow-clad mountain side in Ninjago.
Clancee knew he had a lot of explaining to do.



# CHAPTER 5

***It happened again.*** For years now I've peacefully and tranquilly fulfilled by role as the Green Ninja, only rarely pondering my placement in one of, if not, the most crucial and integral parts of Ninjago's very fate. I tend to think back to a discussion I once had with Dr. Julien on the Dark Island, in the midst of the 'final' battle. He went on about how every cog, every gear within a machine is vital, and if just one part fails, the machine simply wouldn't work. While these words of wisdom were formed whilst repairing Zane's falcon, their grander, more symbolic implications were a lot less subtle. I've always had those worries at the back of my mind, afraid of not being able to live up to the legend and legacy of the Green Ninja, failing my very destiny. Yet I've always chosen to just focus on the mission and get the job done, and when there is no mission, I keep moving. I need to keep moving as to not let these fears and doubts overcome me. Or else I may one day become the cog in the machine that ceases to do what it must, and in turn, everything will fall apart. Though in my time as the Green Ninja, I've always been able to keep level-headed and do what I must to fulfil my destiny, all while never allowing my powers and heritage to taint who it is I truly am. Never a violent outburst, never a step out of line. Never an act that goes against the very principals of wearing the Green Gi. As of late, however, I've felt different. My powers feel more… aggressive. My temper shorter. My purpose clouded and uncertain. I've been quicker to resort to my Elemental Power over my words, something I'm not proud of in the slightest. Maybe I've been pushed to the edge by now, I haven't exactly had chance to come to terms with all that has occurred since being called to the Royal Palace. This is no excuse to use my powers the way I have been doing so recently though, something I truly realise starring into the eyes of this dazed and frightened Serpentine. I know him from the Dark Island. He's part of some type of makeshift Pirate crew. His scales are as green as my element in its purest and brightest form, yet he's no Venomari. He's had every chance to douse me in that venom from Kai's infamous tales. Maybe he's a hybrid between the tribes? Whatever the case, the only thing that matters now is why he's pursuing me on this journey, and what he hopes to gain from all of this.

***'Pppplease, let-let-let me explain my s-s-self!',*** Clancee begged. '*You better start talking! Why did you break our deal?!'* Lloyd's

tone suggested he was less then impressed to see Clancee once again, putting immense pressure on Clancee's shoulders to explain himself carefully and methodically.
*'I-I-I will tell you everything you want to k-know! But not h-h-here',* Clancee responded.
*WHY NOT?!',* Lloyd demanded. In response, Clancee simply raised his right hand and pointed to a dark cloud just behind Lloyd. A violent snowstorm was approaching the two wanderers, who both knew they needed to return to cover in order to avoid becoming the Wailing Alps' next victims. Lloyd extended his right arm, offering to help Clancee up from the deep snow. Clancee responded by reaching out his own right arm, locking hands with Lloyd, and was quickly brought back up on his feet. Lloyd brushed the snow off of Clancee's shoulders, suggesting a temporary truce between the two while ascending the mountain top.
*Thank-thank you, I p-p-promise I'll answer any and a-all of your q-questions.'* Clancee's tone had eased and became slightly more relaxed, feeling comforted by not being on the opposite side of the legendary Green Ninja for once. '*This outcropping should keep us safe for the night, we'll pick up our trail first thing in the morning'*, Lloyd responded with a slightly frustrated tone, *'but let's make one thing clear: after we reach the mountain top, you stick to your end of the deal and leave Ninjago for good. I know an empty Kryptarium cell or two if you decade otherwise.'* Uneased by Lloyd's words, Clancee was quick to agree to the deal. *'Y-y-yes sir!',* Clancee responded. The two shook hands and took shelter from the ever-growing violent winds of the mountain. Clancee settled in nicely beside the fire, yet only did so to replicate traditional human behaviour. Being cold-blooded certainly has its advantages in a place such as the Wailing Alps. *'Tea?',* Lloyd asked the comforted Serpent. *'N-n-no thank you, I appreciate the t-thought though'*, Clancee responded. Lloyd finished brewing his cup and sat just across from Clancee, with only a small heat lamp between them. Lloyd inspected his new acquaintance, curious to see whether or not he had been concealing a blade or another weapon. Yet, the only thing that caught Lloyd's attention was his peg-leg. Empathizing with the Serpentine, Lloyd pondered why someone would make such a journey with such a disadvantage. Is it bravery? Or is it foolishness? Clancee, oblivious to most things around him, noticed the set of faint green eyes inspecting his distinct peg-leg. *'Sorry',* Lloyd

stated, *'I shouldn't stare like that.'* Clancee looked down at his leg. '*Th-tha-that's alright! I-I'm is used to p-people looking at P-P-Peggy like that.'*, Clancee responded. *'Peggy?'*, Lloyd questioned. *'Clancee likes to name his f-favourite things',* he responded, *'it helps Clancee not feel so l-l-lonely when nobody else is around. N-nobody should ever be all on their ow-own. I-I even name every m-m-mop and bucket that Clancee is l-lucky enough to m-meet!'*. Lloyd couldn't help but allow a brief smile. Not out of amusement, rather one out of admiration. Admiration in Clancee's ability to find joy and peace in the simplest of things. Lloyd's eyes began to feel heavy as he pondered whether or not to make himself another brew, realising he had not slept in quite some time now. '*Y-y-you look tired'*, Clancee stated, *'y-you should get some s-sleep'*. Lloyd, knowing Clancee was right, deflected this suggestion. '*I will, but not until you've explained why you broke our deal and left the Dark Island'*, Lloyd responded, practically collapsing by this point. Clancee placed Lloyd's backpack in the corner with his blade laying peacefully against it, leaving ample space for Lloyd to get the rest he needed. *'Clancee will t-tell you his tale in the m-morning, but s-s-sleep is very important'*, he said to Lloyd, as he willingly wrapped himself up for the night, letting out a faint *'thank you'* before falling asleep, leaving Clancee silently reciting his favourite sea shanties by the buzzing lamp.

***'Endings are never really endings, only new beginnings.'*** Words that have filled my dreams for weeks now, despite having no recollection of hearing nor imparting them at any point in my life. Most nights I'm kept up trying to decipher just where these words come from, and what implication they hold over my role as the Green Ninja. Yet I have no time for such thoughts tonight, as the deafening, brutal winds just beyond our outcropping make it impossible to hear even the loudest of sounds. I twist and turn, struggling to fully unwind knowing our shelter could be blown clean off the face of the mountain at any moment. Suddenly, I'm shot straight up from the ground by the unforgettable, ferocious sound of echoing approaching our safe ground. It feels and sounds like an earthquake, yet my gut tells me this is something else. I rush past Clancee to see what is approaching us, only to witness an oncoming snow slide, prepared to swallow us whole. Is this a sign of things to come? Is our journey about to end before it even began?

# CHAPTER 6

***Everything turns white.*** My body was already cooled down and shaking but this feels like a million frozen knives stabbing at me over and over. I fight the current of snow, but this is unlike any enemy I have ever faced... complete onslaught of an element out of control. The cold numbs my arms, and they stop moving. It feels like shackles of Vengestone pull them back and quench their strength. Is this it? After all those near-death encounters with scores of villains? I know that fighting this fight is futile. I remember being stuck in quicksand with Master Wu on the Dark Island, but this is so much worse. I try to release all my Elemental Power but only a few spurts of green illuminate the white. I stop fighting. An image flash into my mind. I am very young and not yet a Ninja. Kai is leaping across stepping stones to get to me as lava rises everywhere. This feels like much the same thing except the intense heat is intense cold. The fear is the same. After that I wanted so much to be like him when I grew up. I had no idea that would come so soon. My thoughts flash to all my friends. Then to Master Wu and my parents. Harumi... I spend a little more time with her than I understand and am comfortable with. I make a conscious decision to return to Kai. He promised that he would always be there for me and he was. I was the one who left. He was my brother and my father when I needed one. I see him before me reaching out his hand for me. It is burning with a bright yellow flame. As I close my eyes it flickers green. Time to go.

***I'm upside down!*** I think I'm upside down! It is really hard to tell. Apart from that this isn't too bad! It stick out my tongue and let it go limb. It flops down on my nose. Yep... I'm definitely upside down. I start to wiggle my fingers and the snow around them loosen. I give old Peggy a twirl. I was never much of a swimmer, but whatever little I can do will come handy now. I turn myself around and start to swim upwards. Snow is just thick water anyway. I try to count my progress. I feel myself go faster. Whaddayaknow? Turns out I have a knack for burrowing! With my life at sea, I never knew. Look at me go! 7, 8, 9, 10. I am hit with a gust of wind. I guess I was ten Clancee's down. I look around for Lloyd, but I don't see him. The outcropping of our little camp has shielded the heat lamp and its orange light reflects on the snow. Time to put that new burrowing knack of mine to good use! I jump back into the snow and start to burrow. I can't believe how good I am at this! This is

GREAT! Mama would be proud... if she'd taken the time to hatch my egg that is. I am having so much fun doing this that I find it hard to keep my mind on the why I am doing this in the first place. Clancee wished that Moppy was here to see him. He felt a sharp pain in his heart and wished he had taken her with him.
But Moppy had a different destiny than him and who would clean the floor in the Tavern if she wasn't there?
*'OW!'* Clancee hit his head hard against something. He must has crossed back and forth the mountainside several times and now he had finally found what he was looking for, painful as it was. Moments later he emerged from the snow and Clancee dragged Lloyd over to the heat lamp. He could hear him muttering words, so he was still alive. Clancee couldn't quite make heads or tails of the words but it sounded like Lloyd was having a conversation with someone. All he could make out was 'Barista Master' and 'folding tower'. Clancee sat down and waited... he had spent 200 years in that weird realm. Clancee was good at waiting.

***It was past midday when Lloyd came to again.*** Clancee had eaten some food from Lloyd's backpack to pass the time and felt guilty about it. Sure, he was a pirate, but the unwritten pirate code forbade to steal from allies. It was with some relief but also anxiety he saw Lloyd's green eyes open.
*'We-we-welcome back amongst the living! I hope you do-don't mind that I helped myself to a little booty when you were sleeping.'*
Clancee regretted his choice of words as soon as he had spoken them. Lloyd looked dazed and utterly confused. He shook his head, tried to focus, then shook his head again.
*'Booty?'*
*'Food! I mean food. I-I-I ate some of your food. I really hope you don't mind'.* Lloyd sat himself up and shook his head once again.
'*Did ... did you just save my life?*' Lloyd was in disbelief.
*'I di-did what any travel companion could and should. That's all.'*
Lloyd couldn't help but smile at this.
*'So, we're travel companions now. I thought you were just stalking me.'* Lloyd saw how Clancee squirmed under the accusation and decided to continue quickly. *'But you are right! We are!'* He held out his hand. It was still shivering with cold, but he didn't feel the sharp pains anymore. Clancee's eyes shifted back and forth not quite sure what to make of it. Finally, he took Lloyd's hand and shook it, first gently but then vigorously.

*'Ok, ok! Mind if I eat some of my food too?'* Lloyd said as he withdrew his hand. Clancee handed him his backpack.
*'So, apart from stalking me, do you have a reason for going up the mountain?'* Lloyd knew this was a daring inquiry, but he was still surprised to see Clancee's reaction. He wasn't an expert on reading the emotional range of Serpentine by any stretch of the imagination, but still there was something going on behind those wide reptile eyes. Clancee hesitated before he spoke.
*'I'm lo-lo-looking for my friends. They were here too. They broke the deal too. We all did. We left the Dark Island. Then came here. They went up the mountain to seek an audience with the Wishmaster. We-we-we're hoping it out old captain. He could grant wishes. Maybe it is him. Ma-ma-maybe it's Capitan Nadakhan!'*
*'Nadakhan?!?'* Lloyd had heard the name before. His exploits were notorious. Not exactly common knowledge, but if you looked deep enough into history books or asked a Borg InfoVision the right questions, you would know. He had also heard Nya and Jay whisper the name between them several occasions, but they had always denied it and been very dismissive when he had mentioned it to them. Lovers gotta have their secrets, I suppose.
*'So, to reunite with friends? That's a noble cause.'*
Clancee was clearly relieved that he had focused on the positive aspects of his reasoning.
*'Aaaa-nd why are you going?'* Clancee asked.
*'My reasons are my own. But that doesn't mean we can't trek together. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you. ... Tell me about your Captain. Why do you miss him so? How long have you been apart?'* Clancee squirmed again. He wasn't sure what to say. The real answer seemed implausible even to him... and he had lived it.
*'Two-Two-Two hundred years!'* He finally exclaimed. Lloyd looked at him. His brain still felt frozen. He knew Nadakhan had ruled the sea a while back, but this made little sense.
*'Fine... if you don't want to tell me, I can respect that. So we both have secrets, but I think we can trust each other. And I am starting to feel better, so whadayasay we pack up and head for the summit?'*
This was music to the Serpentine's ears (which were placed right behind his eyes). Lloyd stood up stretched and gathered up the gear. Then he turned to resume the climb. But not before saying just one more thing.
*'And thank you for saving my life Clancee!'*

# CHAPTER 7

***My thoughts continue to act as nothing but a hindrance*** during our ascent. As if it weren't difficult enough trying to remember even the slightest detail about my dreams of the golden-petal-coated paradise of a realm, discovering my new travel companion's motives for voyaging onward hasn't eased my suspicions in the slightest. Not so much that he's seeking to reunite with his old pirate crew – they're nothing we couldn't handle in the past – more so who he hopes to seek out atop the mountain.

***Oh no! He is looking at me weirdly!*** The green ninja is looking at me weirdly! Has he changed his mind?!?! Is he plotting to assault me? I shouldn't have told him about the captain!

***That name… Nadakhan… it's one I've heard before,*** yet much like my dreams, one I haven't a singular memory of encountering at any point. As much as they attempt to shrug it off and sweep it under the rug, Nya and Jay have quietly spoken that name several times… either that or they both really enjoy that Bananakhan ice cream from the Dairy Dragon, but that wouldn't explain their sudden silence upon anyone else at the Monastery entering the room. They definitely know more then they let on, though in that regard, I'm not exactly any better. I am here on my own after all. Or at least I was.
Clancee has proven to be a valuable companion thus far. Him being cold-blooded may prove to be our greatest weapon out in this vicious cold, even more so then my Elemental Powers. They didn't exactly prove much use while trapped under all that snow after all. I have Clancee and only Clancee to thank for dragging me out of that one, otherwise I may not even be walking here right now. I've adjusted to this new partnership quite well given my past experience with Serpentine alliances. After being back-stabbed and betrayed time and time again by the Serpentine upon releasing them from their tombs – can't say I didn't deserve it to be fair – it feels poetic to now be working alongside a Serpentine who has a noble cause. Which reminds me, once this climb has reached its end, I need to make it the team's top priority to track down Pythor. We haven't encountered him since that dispute over the BorgWatch, shortly after his attempt to destroy me on the Day of the Departed… I can only imagine whatever he may be plotting

nowadays. I need to keep my head in the present though, one mission at a time.

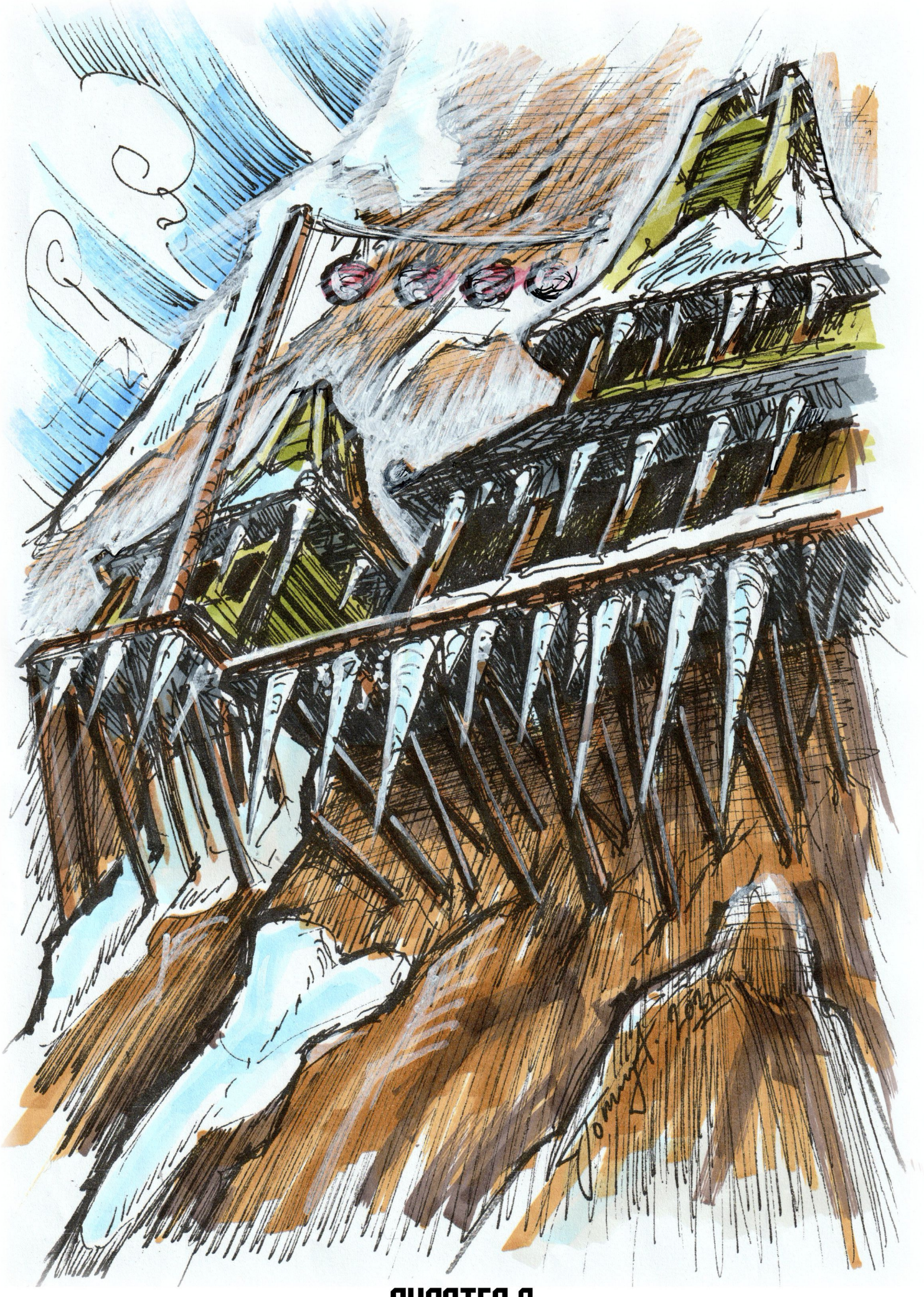
***Calm down Clancee!*** It's only in your mind! You did dig him out under that pile of snow. He seemed very grateful for that!
Oh no! What if that is some sort of ninja trick! If only I wasn't so slow I could .... Waaaaaah! He's looking my way again!

***I look behind me to see how Clancee is faring*** through the deep snow. *"Clancee?"*, I shout, *"how you holding up back there?"*
Truthfully, I wouldn't be surprised if he couldn't hear a thing I was saying. No matter how loud I call out, these brutish winds and unsettling claps of thunder make it impossible to hear anything but the natural ways of the Wailing Alps.
*"S-sstill s-standing!"* Clancee responded, "*s-sorry for being so s-slow, Peggy doesn't l-like the deep snow! She k-keeps getting buri…"* Clancee's speech was cut off by the ever-so persistent, brutal winds of the mountain.
I stop dead in my tracks, trying to see past the white walls of violent snow to see if Clancee is still in sight. Without hesitation, I make my way back to catch up with the Serpent, knowing that if either one of us is left stranded on this inevitable tomb of a mountain, we would never be seen nor heard from again.
*"Clancee?!"* I scream from the bottom of my lungs, holding out the flickering buzzing lamp in hopes of attracting my companion's attention.
*"H-h-here!"* Clancee faintly responded from the snow. I lean in to make sure he can hear my instructions without fail.
*"Clancee, grab onto my wrist as we move forward. From here on out, we move as one unit! We can't afford to lose each other in the storm!"*
Clancee looked scared, then shook his head and grabbed onto my right wrist as I continued to hold out the lamp. While I felt infinitely safer moving forward together, I knew our progress would be slowed down, meaning a greater amount of time being spent in these brutal storms.
*"S-s-sorry for being a nuisance"* Clancee remarked after several minutes of silence, "*I k-know you wanted to come h-here all on your own."*
While that was my initial plan, I don't have an issue with not tavelling alone, especially with someone as optimistic as Clancee by my side.

*"You're not a nuisance Clancee,"* I responded, *"without you I may not even be standing right now, between that and you're unbridled optimism, nuisance is the last word I'd use to describe you."*

***... another Ninja trick?*** What is this strange way of speaking? It is doing something to me. Like I am getting warm inside. Some sort of ninja magic? It feels good ... I can feel my will is waning.

***I noticed Clancee look at me,*** almost as if he was surprised to hear what I had to say. Something told me he'd never been complimented nor reassured too often, and that this makeshift pirate crew he was seeking out were the only people he felt even a little comfortable with.
After a few more minutes of silence filled only by the gusts of aggressive wind, Clancee spoke up once again.
*"W-w-when we reach the top of the m-mountain…"* Clancee briefly paused to let the next gust of snow pass, *"w-when I m-meet up with my friends and mmaybe even Captain Nadakhan… when w-we leave Ninjago f-for the Dark Island or m-maybe even another realm, I think I will m-miss this journey."*
It took me a moment or two to properly register what Clancee had just said.
*"Clancee…"* I responded, *"why on Earth would you miss this journey? It's been nothing but danger and near-death calls for us so far!" I probably could've worded my response a little better, but I can't find any redeeming qualities in what we've encountered so far."*
*"I-It's not very often I get t-to venture on many exciting quests l-like this"* the humble Serpent responded, *"m-most of my days are s-spent in quiet rooms all on my o-own. No-no-nobody apart from my-crew ever talks to me… well, not n-nicely at least. I don't have m-many friends. Actually, I don't have any friends… apart f-from Moppy and Peggy of ccourse!"*
As if I didn't empathize with him enough. It was clear Clancee attached himself to things very easily. Part of me wants to bring him to the Serpentine settlement beneath Ninjago City. I think he'd fit in quite nicely with those of his own kind, yet I know all he seeks is to reunite with his crew and sail on this Misfortune's Keep once again. Maybe I can present the option to him at some point, once I see with my own eyes how he is treated by his crew.



# CHAPTER 8

***'Windows?!? I'm the Green Ninja!*** *Why would I want to be cleaning windows?!?!'* Lloyd words came out a little harder than he intended. To pass the time the odd couple working their way up the mountain had engaged in a conversation. It had somehow led to the subject of responsibility and dealing with stress. That was not what Lloyd needed right now. But Clancee wouldn't let it go.
*'VERY satisfying. Up and d-d-down. Up and d-d-down. And the s-s-sun is your friend. I call her Sunny! If you have missed a s-s-spot, she will let you know, and you g-g-get to do it all over again. You can really see in Sunny's light. Per-fe-fe-fection. Very Satisfying'*.
Lloyd rolled his eyes. He had rather enjoyed Clancee's company up until this point, but he was starting to realize just how different they really were. And why did he have to name everything, Lloyd thought as he looked down at 'Lampy' in his hand?
*'I can also re-recommend dish washing. That's an entirely different s-s-set of motions. Round and round and round and round! And to see the stack of plates g-grow taller and taller. The joy!'*
*'Look Clancee, I am not going to be cleaning any windows or anything else. My priorities are greater than that. I need to focus on the well being of Ninjago.'* Lloyd felt a painful sting as he said that. What was he doing here? He was here for himself and this quest was not in the service of anyone else. He quickly tried to argue to himself that it was in everyone's best interest that his father's whereabouts was accounted for, but he relented as he knew he was just making excuses to himself.
Clancee had grown silent and that did not help Lloyd's mood either. Now he just felt alone with the howling winds. He turned to Clancee to pick up the conversation again.
*'Hey Clancee ... Why don't we play a word game. I know a fun little one I used to play at Darkley's. What you do ...'*
Lloyd stopped. Clancee was staring past him and upwards. Lloyd turned to do the same, and as the clouds parted, there was the Hanging Temple no farther than a hundred yards ahead of them. The old woman's well rehearsed tale at the inn echoed in his head:
*'There is a man in Ninjago. He lives in an abandoned temple near the peak of the highest mountain. It stubbornly clings to the mountain's steep snow-clad sides. The wailing winds pummel the time-worn rafters in a continuous battle between the cold, the wind, age, and gravity.*
Dramatic as it was, this was a very accurate description. They journey up the mountain was at an end.

***The heavy wooden door cried a hundred years old*** cry as it swung open, fell inwards off its rusted hinges and hit the floor with a loud thud. Snow whirled up and drifted in the freezing air of the dark temple. Lloyd strained his eyes to make out the interior, but he felt simultaneously snow blind and like he had been hit by a hammer of darkness at the very same time. He gave himself a few seconds for his eyes to adjust before he walked forward and lit up a green flame with his fist. The green flames cast eerie shadows everywhere and it was hard to make out anything specific. But most of all Lloyd had a lump in his throat and a pressing sensation in his chest.

*'The are no one here! Here's nothing!'* He felt a sting of shame and embarrassment and he walked forward another few steps. Why had he abandoned his friends and disregared Ninjago to go in this selfish quest? What was he hoping to find here in the first place. Clancee walked past him with hesitant steps took the heat lamp and lit it up. It's orange light mixed in with the green and gave a slightly better view of the place. It had surely been a glorious place once, but now it was nothing but a ruin which had succumbed to the elements. Beams of white light from the outside streamed in through cracks on the walls and once exquisite furniture was now nothing but rotting echoes of some proud past.

*'I-I-I wish I had brought Moppy. This place could use some of her care.'*

Lloyd wasn't sure if Clancee was being genuine or if he was trying to distract from the grim expression which would have been very visible on Lloyd's face.

*'At least we ha-have shelter for the night ... mostly'*. Clancee pushed down on the soggy pillows on a couch. He was trying hard to camouflage his own panic. Where were his friends?

Lloyd fought past his disappointment, cleared his throat and tried to give both himself and Clancee back a bit of hope.

*'This is a big place. Maybe we just took a wrong door. I say we have some exploring to do!'*

***And so the unlikely duo set about exploring the temple.*** Lloyd was right about one thing ... this place was big! And as they searched through chamber after chamber they were both struck with an quiet awe of how grandiose and impressive it must have been back in the day. The craftsmanship on the carved pillars was telling stories with meticulous and intricate cuts. Room after

room were filled with carvings. It would have taken one individual decades and just the thought of how all the timber would have been brought up the mountain boggled the mind.
They didn't mean to split up but they did. Lloyd was trying to decipher the wood-carved tale of a wild haired man riding a dragon. Clancee had found some woven tapestries that showed Ninjago as complete circular continent which appeared to be mostly frozen over. The two walked father and farther apart mesmerized by what they were seeing. Then there was a loud creak!
The floor, rotten or worn thin gave way under Clancee. In a desperate attempt to catch himself he reached out and grabbed hold of the tapestry but it just ripped and Clancee fell downward. He hit the lower floor hard and found himself covered by the tapestry. After a few moments to check himself and find his bearings, he started to dig his way out. Above him he could hear running steps and Lloyd calling out for him.
*'I-I-I'm alright Master Lloyd! Just bumped the ol' noggin a bit',* he replied as he picked up the heat lamp which had survived the fall unscathed as well. He shrieked as he saw something moving out of the corner of his eye and spun to illuminate it. It was just a scrap of paper which had been disturbed by the commotion and was settling down on the floor. Clancee drew a breath of relief and reached to pick it up. He started to make out the beautifully written letters on its bleached parchment. The words made his already cold blood run even colder. As he took in each word, he stated to realize the they had not come here is vain. Old Gertrude's words echoed in his mind as he read the entire page. He had heard it dozens of times back at the inn and now her words rang completely true to him for the very first time. The WISHMASTER was real. He realized that in this moment and as he stared into the face of destiny he knew that he would be forever changed just like the people in the old woman's tale.
*'Have you found something?'* Clancee was jerked back to reality by Lloyd's voice. He quickly folded up the scrap of paper and stuck inside his vest. '*No ... no no-nothing',* he lied.
*'Well I think you did ... just look at this!'*
Up through the hole, bathed in Lloyd's green light Clancee saw a door right where the tapestry had been ripped away. This one was not made of wood though, but of solid gleaming ice. Carved into it was a symbol ... a shuriken shaped snowflake.
The symbol of an elemental master of ice.

# CHAPTER 9

***A silence thicker than the opaque ice-sculpted door*** that stands mere inches from us fills the brittle wonder that is the legendary Hanging Temple. As I attempt to make sense of the situation and muster up a cohesive thought, my companion is quick to loudly ponder his own.

*Wh-wh-what is it?'* Clancee queried, sounding certain I would have even the slightest idea. Alas, my knowledge mustn't be as broad as Master Wu claims, as I find myself unable to answer Clancee's simple question. Not because the symbol carved into the looming doors is one unfamiliar to me. I've seen it time and time again plastered on Zane's numerous white gi's. I even recognize it from my long-winded study sessions with Wu, in my attempts to familiarize myself with the earliest generations of Elemental Masters. But what is it doing all the way out here? So far up north and so high up the tallest mountain, purposely hidden in one of Ninjago's most overlooked structures. It almost feels like some type of cruel joke… coming all this way, chasing a mystical entity with the ability to bend and change the course of the future. And here I finally am, pursuing a selfish and foolish desire, faced with nothing I couldn't simply behold from the comforts of the Monastery. Between finding nothing but this symbol and the lack of a single inhabitant within this temple, I'm left to ponder again… Has this ascent all been for nothing? Has this been a fruitless venture? Is the Wishmaster even real?

*'M-Master Lloyd? Is everything a-a-alright?'* Clancee questions. Realizing I hadn't spoken a word in minutes, I do my best to accurately respond to my insecure ally.

*'It's the symbol of an Elemental Master of Ice. Every fighter entrusted to protect and defend Ninjago with the element of Ice.'* Clancee's gaze shifted back to the semi-opaque doors once again, not sure what to take away from my response.

*'Ice is actually one of four Elements of Creation'*, I continue, '*the very essence inherited by my uncle, gifted to him by the creator of Ninjago himself. My brother Zane currently holds the mantle as Master of Ice, has done for quite some time now… wish he could see what we're seeing right now.'*

Realizing I have just given Clancee a history lesson once imparted on me by Wu, my eyes shift focus to a string of unreadable text, one Clancee nor myself can make out in the slightest.

*'Wh-what does it s-s-say?'* Clancee asks, hoping I'll be able to answer. 'I'm not sure…', I respond, *'…I can't say for sure, but*

*it looks like it's written in the old tongue, the language in which Master Wu's oldest scrolls are written. I recognize it from my studies, but never took the time to practice it. Never thought I'd actually need it honestly, I've never seen out outside Wu's old scrolls, let alone in a place like this.'* I start to get the impression that only a master of Ice carries the ability to unlock these doors. Seems pretty fitting in a place like the Wailing Alps actually. An environment surrounded by the cruellest of colds and an endless stream of snowstorms and blizzards. Realizing our attempts to gain access to whatever laid behind these doors would be futile, both Clancee and myself take a step back, both pondering our next move.

Clancee was starting to panic, now unsure of his crew's whereabouts.

*'W-w-what do we d-do now?'* he asked with a noticeable tremble in his voice.

He was clearly concerned for his crew, especially as this intense cold poses no concern for a coldblooded creature like him. Despite my own doubts and uncertainty, I attempted to remain as calm and collected as possible, opting to analyse the gleaming doors once again as opposed to deeming this journey dead in its tracks. A decision that notably paid off, highlighting a distinct crack that trailed the entirety of the door's height. Going out on a limb, I step forward and attempt to push the doors open yet am instantly challenged by the weight of such high quantities of solid ice.

*'Clancee?'* I questioned. 'Y-yes Master L-Lloyd?' he responded, still slightly trembling. *'Would you mind giving me a hand with these doors?'* I asked, to which he slowly but surely acknowledged and made his way to the adjacent door. After a nod of approval, we simultaneously pushed both doors with everything we had, and after moments of struggle with a determination unlike any, the doors finally gave way and slowly swung open, causing a small cloud of snow to scatter across my hair and Clancee's scales. Presented in front of us was now a large, dark tunnel, coated in rough, jagged ice. I look over at Clancee, who now has a restored look of hope in his eyes, realizing his crew may still very well be atop this ungenial mountain. *'Looks like we still have a way to go. You ready?'* I ask, despite already knowing the answer.

'As ready as I-I'll ever be!' he responds, more excited and encouraged than ever. I ignite my right fist with green flames, while Clancee preps and holds out the heat la… Lampy. We give

each other a nod and enter the bleak tunnel, only becoming even further engulfed in darkness as the towering doors slowly closed just behind us.
We slowly and delicately descend deep into the tunnel, covering what feels like miles and miles of ground. Thinking about where we might be headed, I realize we must be venturing into the very structure of the Wailing Alps itself, and that the Hanging Temple only serves as a mere façade to mask whatever may lay within the mountain's depths. As I home in on my thoughts, Clancee and I are both hit with a gleaming ray of bright light, indicating this tunnel would soon meet its end. We continue to push forward and eventually emerge on the other side of the icy maze, yet nothing could have prepared either of us for what would be waiting for us on the other side. We emerge in a small, round room, coated entirely in Ice. The walls decorated with towering, prestigious ice sculptures of great warriors, all circling an immaculate carving placed in the centre of the room. Each sculpture specifically carved to showcase certain robes and faces, all engraved with the very symbol of Ice sculpted into the doors. At the centre of a room towered a sculpture of an elder man with long white hair, eyebrows as thick as the ice surrounding us, and a beard specifically groomed for battle. These were former Elemental Masters of Ice. This place their sacred Temple of Ice. Master Wu believes a legendary temple like this exists for each Element of Creation, located in varying parts of the continent, each surrounded by their respective elements. While I am left speechless and breathless at the sight of these pristine statues, my mind drifts to questioning how Clancee and I are even standing here. How was a temple as sacred as this accessed without the current master of Ice to do so?
*'M-master Lloyd!'* Clancee exclaims, *'C-come look at th-this!'*. I rush to the centre of the room and am left to admire a delicately carved mural, telling a tale of a sole Ice Master who ascended the mountain to conquer a large dragon, claiming its nest as his new temple in the wake of his victory. If I didn't know any better, I'd say this was the first ever Master of Ice, who had just unearthed a temple that would be honoured for generations to come.
This place may not be exactly what I thought I would discover atop this forsaken place, yet I feel quite honoured to be in a sacred temple such as this.
Maybe this journey hasn't been fruitless after all.

# CHAPTER 10

***The outer doors have been breached.*** The scraping sound echoes through the ice, so I always know. It doesn't happen often anymore. I had my disciples make them harder to open so only the more able-bodied adventurers could make it though. Too much riff-raff have arrived and it has become a problem. Some of them I allow to join my people. Some I dispense of in unpleasant ways and a few I send back down the mountain with their desires granted. I have confidence they will never tell anyone what they saw here, but I know they will radiate just that energy which their new-found hope in their future gives them.Others will notice and be drawn to me by their own miserable desires to quick-fix something they are unable to fathom a solution for themselves. Pathetic! But I have been attracting the wrong kind. A few able ones have made it here and I have given them the honour of joining my cause. But too many are weak, useless and nothing but a burden. They have met their end as such. My trap was set a while ago, and maybe today will be the day my intended prey finally makes it here. There are several who would benefit me. But I am hoping for the green one.
Whoever breached the doors today must be strong in both will and body. By now he (I hope it is a he) will be standing in front of the ice statues marvelling in their exquisite detail and trying to piece together the events that have gone before this moment. But the small hall of the Ice Masters is merely a pretty veil to hide what really awaits him. I look forward to meeting him soon. If it is who I hope it is, my trap will snap and I can finally embark on the next phase of my plan.
When a King is ejected from his rule he can either wither away in exile, reclaim his lost domain or take a new one by force. I aim to take back what was once mine and more. That is what I want for myself. That is the wish of the Wishmaster!

***'Thiss is interesting and all, but it isn't really why I came here.'*** Lloyd had to abandon his thoughts and turned to the green-scaled Serpentine by his side.
*'I didn't expect this either Clancee, but you gotta admit it is pretty cool. I was here once before ... at the Hanging Temple I mean, but we had a different purpose and we never went inside.'*
*'You went up the mountainssssside before? Why? How? It was so-so-so hard ... and steep and sssssnowy!'*
*'I was with friends. And we had a flying ship and some pretty cool*

*mechs. Plus, Cole was a ghost at the time and he could pull off some pretty neat tricks'.*
Lloyd couldn't help but be amused by the utter bewilderment which was spread across Clancee's face.
*'He was a gh-gh-host?'* he stuttered.
*'I'll tell you about it sometime.'* Lloyd realized that though Clancee had seen Cole on The Dark Island, he may have not understood exactly what his green-glowing adversary would have been. He felt bad about brushing off such a relevant question but there were more urgent matters to attend too. He continued.
*'Let's continue onward. These statues are a good omen. I am sure we will find what we are looking for. If we keep our focus and don't get distracted.'* Maybe that would shut Clancee up for a little while. While Lloyd did appreciate the company, he also wanted to get to the bottom of this quickly, and secretly he was still worried about this whole endeavour ... and ashamed. As much as he wanted this, he felt selfish for coming here.

The duo pushed on. They briefly studied each statue and there were dozens. Lloyd had been in enough locations of legend (and seen enough swashbuckling Fritz Donnegan adventure films) to know that there could be pressure pads or handles hidden anywhere. People who built places like this seemed to have a penance for theatrics. It's like one of those video games Jay and Cole always play. There has never been a waterfall without a hidden cave behind it, or an alter which couldn't be pushed to the side to reveal a hidden staircase. Lloyd chuckled to himself. Apparently game designers aren't much different from architects of mystic temples... as much as they build to keep intruders out, they don't want to let the intruders down either. It's just good form to make it interesting rather than impossible. Lloyd made a mental note. The next time he found himself blocked by a brick wall, he would press each and every brick ...and he wouldn't be surprised if the wall turned out to be a hologram either.

Lloyd had lost count of how many statues they had passed when they finally reached the end of the room. They must have walked quite a way into the mountain at this point.
Before them were another pair of doors. Again the symbol of the Ice Masters adorned it but there was a different welcoming quality to this one. With great expectation Lloyd pushed it open.

This might just have been the biggest room Lloyd had ever seen. I was like the entire inside of the mountain had been carved away ... or perhaps the mountain itself had been created to enclose this huge area. Ice pillars shot hundreds of feet into the air and hundreds of feet below. Ice bridges and catwalks crossed back and forth in a immaculate pattern resembling the endlessly chaotic yet perfectly symmetric and logical construction of a snowflake. Light bounced from one surface to next and reflections and refractions seemed to play a cheerful game of cat and mouse as they travelled form on end of the room to the other in the blink of an eye.
But one thing was the sheer grandness of the room. Lloyd shook his head. 'Room' was clearly the wrong word to describe this space. 'Hall' didn't do it justice either. He gave up. This simply defied words. But one thing was the spectacle another was the sound. Strange and wonderful music played and seemed to engulf everything. Chimes and bells which must have played impossibly loud rang out, but it was the most calming sound he had ever heard and it seemed to come from nowhere and everywhere. It sounded like the wailing winds from the outside played a thousand organ pipes and a million ice shards reverberated in perfect unison. Lloyd knew that the beauty this music would haunt him to the end of his days.
And there were people there. Lloyd could see at least a dozen persons at any time. People were walking back and forth across the catwalks just going about their business.
*'Welcome travellers. I'm Yana. I am happy to meet you. '.*
Lloyd was startled as the smooth voice cut through the music with ease. A beautiful woman emerged from inside an ice crystal alcove and bowed gently. She wore simple clothes and her warmth of her breath danced in intricate patterns as it met the cold air. Lloyd didn't speak. He was captivated by her beauty and the whole situation was just overwhelming. The woman spoke again.
*'You must be so proud to have made it up the mountain. Your will must be as strong as your desires for happiness in your future.'* She took measure of Clancee, but her gaze drifted back to Lloyd. There was a eerie calm to her eyes. Lloyd's own eyes were special. As his powers had grown, they had become a mirror which reflected his powers. But the woman's eyes were different. Lloyd couldn't quite put his finger on it, but what he saw felt opposite. A lack of power? Nevertheless, he stated why they were there.
*'We are here to see the WISHMASTER! Can you take us to him?'*

# CHAPTER 11

***The wind blows in his face as he looks up the mountain.*** Has he been here before? He doesn't know. A fleeting memory drifts past, but it is elusive and he can't hold onto it. His thoughts are like a mirror shattered into a thousand pieces, each of which reflects a blinding light; fragments of the past, un-happened events and things that was meant to be but never were.
The pieces pierce his brain, and the pain is constant except for brief moments of relief whenever he has finished his writings. He doesn't know it himself, but he has wandered this land for thousands of years. He is an exile who has been trying to piece together an impossibly huge puzzle in his mind, but all the pieces keep getting lost or shift in size and shape. For thousands of years he has been looking for conclusive answers but never found any.
Another distant memory flashes past. It couldn't have been long ago in a snow swept location much like this. Two young men, one in black and one in blue looked at him with recognition and hope. He remembers the feeling of hope himself. Would there finally be an answer? But then their smiles fell and were replaced by expressions of disappointment. He was not the one they were looking for. They never knew his name as he never knew theirs.

The small inn in front of him looked inviting and he decided to walk inside. He brushed the snow off his long beard, walked across the dirty floor and found a quiet place in a dark corner.
An old woman came over and smiled warmly at him.
*'Welcome weary traveller! I am Gertrude, the proprietor of this fine establishment. I do apologize about the floor. My help has recently abandoned his duties and I find myself severely understaffed. Want can I interest you in this fine evening?'*
No response. Gertude hesitated but then ventured a suggestion.
*'Would you care for a cup tea?'*
Again no response. Gertrude inquired again.
*'Would you care for a cup tea?'*
A pause which felt like forever came and went. Then the old man spoke. His voice was frail like it hadn't spoken in a long time.
*'… Quanish!'*
*'Pardon my old, tired ears. What was that again?'*
*'Quanish!'*, the old man repeated.
That was a word he had clung to for as long as he could remember, and he would repeat it to himself over and over. The word brought him some solace and he had adopted it as his name. Maybe it

was, he had no way of knowing for sure. He rarely spoke with other people. They never seemed to understand what he was trying to tell them. Instead he wrote. Gertrude spoke again.
*'Okay … Quanish. Do you like tea?'*
The old man looked up and Gertrude had to hide her shock as he gazed deep into his sunken in eyes. It was like starting into a bottomless abyss which contained nothing but desperate questions.
*'I … I don't remember. Maybe I do … I'm not sure …'*
Gertrude cleared her throat and tried to brighten the mood.
*'Well, who doesn't? Let me bring you a nice warm cup of Pale Moon Tea to get you started. It's on the house. And then I will tell you about the mountain.'* Gertrude turned and shuffled over the dirty floor towards toward the kitchen.

The old man looked around the room but there was nothing in there to jog his memory and further. It was dim and sparsely populated. Pain shot into his brain again as images flashed behind his eyes. He sighed. There was only one remedy for this. He took out a quill and a piece of parchment. It was already folded neatly and decorated with illustrations and letters he did not recognize. Then he started writing. The symbols which found their shape on the paper were strange and unknown to him, but his hand always moved like it had a will of its own or some direct connection to his brain. He watched for a while as more mysterious symbols found their way onto the yellowed paper. His hand finally stopped. He didn't know why, but he knew whatever he had been working on was now finished. He sighed a deep sigh of relief as the pain cleared from his mind. Then he rolled up the parchment, tied a delicate ribbon around it and attached a small note with letters he did recognize. This was an action he had performed thousands of times over the years. He looked at the room again, but the darkness had been replaced by a bright light, and for the first time since the day in the monastery he felt hope.

As his eyes adjusted and he found himself on a grassy field. Masses of land hovered overhead in the bright blue sky, but it was the sweet smell of flowers that blew in the breeze which caught his attention most. It held the promise of better times to come.
*'Welcome Quanish!'* The voice was mild and full of wisdom.
Quanish turned to see a large silhouette of a dragon against the

bright warm light. A figure stood close by it.
Golden petals seemed to dance in the wind around it.
*'Yes, I am Quanish. Am I not? We have met before … haven't we?'*
*'We have ... twice … but a long time ago. Once in Ninjago and once in this place.'* The words recalled a memory in Quanish's mind.
*'I seem to remember that time in Ninjago ... there were ... children there?'* The shadowy figure nodded gently.
'*My sons. They are old men now and beyond my reach.*'
*'... Is it finally time to move on?'* Tears forced their way into the corners of Quanish's eyes.
*'It is if you want it to be. It is a choice you need to make. The last time you were here and I extended an offer to you, you didn't take it. You said you had something you had yet to do. Something unfinished. You have spent a long time in Ninjago since then and you have done remarkable work.'*
Quanish exhaled.
*'I feel like my work has finished, but I don't feel like it was remarkable. People never seemed understand. They called me a fool. And I have so many questions. If I move on will there be answers?'*.
The silhouette reached its hand forward invitingly.
*'There will be all the answers you could ever want'.*
For the first time in thousands of years Quanish smiled.
*'In that case I would like to accept your offer this time.'*
Quanish extended his own hand, and the warm light of this strange place grew impossibly bright and swallowed him whole.

When Gertrude returned with the tea, she immediately knew that her gesture of hospitality was in vain.
The old man was sunken over lifeless and there were no signs of breathing. She put down the tea gently and made sure. To her surprise she found the man's eyes full of peace. The desperation was all gone and a subtle smile graced his bearded face. This was a man who was at peace and had been ready to move on.
*'Godspeed old fool. We should all be so lucky.'* Gertrude spoke softly. Then her gaze fell upon his hand. A rolled-up scroll was extended forward like this was some final gift or one last request.
Gertrude picked it from his hand gently.
A label on it read:

'Care of the Library at Domu
From Quanish the Elder'

# CHAPTER 12

***He has arrived.*** Lloyd Garmadon. The prophesised Green Ninja, he who's destiny foretold of the Dark Lord's downfall and defeat in the mists of a historic battle, one conjured from its deficient ashes from a thousand years prior.
The grandson of the First Spinjitzu Master himself. A tormented soul who has been left to suffer time and time again, who after all this time, all these years of loss, pain, and uncertainty… has found his way to our village, our remote sanctuary, burdened with an ever-growing desire to grace the presence of my master. Just as he had foretold.

*'The Wishmaster will be most pleased to make your acquaintance young Garmadon.'* Yana responded, answering the eager traveller's question in a way that sent chills down his spine. Prompted not by her ominous and unnerving tones, rather her knowledge and sheer certainty of Lloyd's identity without a proper exchange of a formal greeting. As Lloyd attempted to form a concise response for the angelic-like hostess, her beauty continued to leave him in a state of absolute captivation. Yet what caught the attention of his emerald-green eyes more than anything else was a lingering sense of familiarity. One that, through specific features and attributes possessed by Yana, reminded him of a troubled princess, one his heart unwillingly still belonged to. With his haunted past clouding him from formulating even a single word, Clancee decided the time had come for his own attempt at an introduction.
*'G-g-greetings!'* he exclaimed, snapping Lloyd out of his dream-like state, and drawing Yana's immaculate gaze to only him.
'*My n-name is Clancee, and this is my trusty ol' p-p-peg leg Peggy!* It's an h-honour to meet you m-m-my lady!' he continued. Lloyd became quickly confused and taken back. Despite only knowing Clancee for the duration of their journey, he was able to get a clear understanding of Clancee's personality and character traits, so was left somewhat bewildered by Clancee's introduction.
It was an out-of-character move, as the frail Serpent hardly initiated the conversation, rather kept along with one already started in fear of being looked down on. Seemingly breaking through his shy and timid barriers, something had clearly resonated within Clancee, like a fire had been lit beneath his drive and desires for making this climb. While unexpected, Lloyd certainly hadn't a bad thought regarding his companion's drive, rather had gained a finer hope that their mission would soon reach its end.

*'Clancee',* Yana swiftly responded with a calm, hushed demeanour, *'former Head Ship's Mate of the glorious Misfortune's Keep. A proud and noble pirate, one defined by the unbreakable loyalty to your fellow crew and mighty captain. A rare instance of a Serpentine hybrid between tribes. Remarkable.'*

Both astounded by Yana's observations, Lloyd and Clancee exchanged a brief surprised-glare before the latter spoke up once more.

*'T-t-that's me all right! The p-proudest hatchling of a V-Venomari and Hypnobrai you'll ever m-m-meet!'*

A brief silence fell about as Yana examined the Serpent. '*And yet',* she continued, *'you inherited neither of their astounding abilities… a true shame. However, you are now in the graces of the Wishmaster's domain. A divine, magical, prosperous place where your deepest desires can be moulded into a reality. What is it you seek atop our beloved mountain Clancee? What desires do you hold closest to your heart?'* Uncertain and overwhelmed, Clancee hadn't the slightest idea on how to respond to the hostess' life-altering queries, and opted to signal over to Lloyd in hopes of allowing him to take control of the situation.

*'We've travelled a far distance',* the young Ninja quietly responded, *'between the thousands of meters ascended on this mountain, and the unforgiving chills outside, I think my companion and I need a few hours to gather our thoughts and rest. We'd like to be at our best and brightest when meeting the Wishmaster, especially after coming all this way. Is there anywhere in your village we can rest up, even if only briefly?'* Clancee simply shook his head alongside Lloyd's words as the pair eagerly awaited Yana's response. Yet her words were not ones that installed the two with complete comfort.

'*Why of course',* she answered, *'we have accommodation waiting for you young Garmadon.'* Lloyd's stomach knotted before dropping entirely. '*You… you knew we were coming?'* he cautiously responded, fighting to not let his unnerved tones concern Clancee.

*'The Wishmaster has been expecting you for some time now',* she continued, '*yet I must apologise in advance for the confined quarters, your a fellow wanderer is a factor overlooked by my master.'*

In the midst of her response, Yana had turned her back towards the duo and began making her way towards said accommodation, prompting Lloyd and Clancee to follow. Yet the two had become less then keen to do so, pondering whether or not they had greatly underestimated the sheer abilities of the Wishmaster and his village.

'*Do not fret Green Saviour Lloyd and Pirate Clancee'*, she responded

to their silence, *'the Wishmaster has your greatest interests at heart. You will be safe in the hands of he who knows what is yet to come.'* Lloyd and Clancee shared a concerned, almost frightful gaze while Yana continued forward, as the two knew they had come too far to turn back with the Wishmaster in sight. Lloyd approached Clancee and placed his hand on the Serpent's shoulder. '*Keep close and stay grounded',* he whispered to the Serpent, *'we don't know what lies within the village, so don't let your guard down. I've got your back, just like you've got mine. We're close Clancee, we just have to go a little further.'* Comforted and reassured by Lloyd's words, Clancee nodded his head and responded with a quiet yet enthusiastic *'R-RIGHT!'* as the two made way and trailed Yana.

Following a short yet silent walk only filled with the ringing of bells and chimes, Yana welcomed the pair to their quarters, which despite her previous warnings, was certainly capable of housing well over two occupants. *'Rest for the night'*, Yana stated, '*and I will inform the Wishmaster of your arrival. Feel free to make acquaintance with the occupants of the village come sunrise, they will be ever-so thrilled to welcome in two new inhabitants to our alluring home. Welcome to our Sacred Sanctuary, Green Saviour Lloyd and Pirate Clancee.'* During her departure, Yana shared a welcoming yet ominous glance with Lloyd, one that eliminated any and all feelings of comfort and contentment. While her gentle tone brought about a sense of peace and belonging, the look in her eyes raised a thousand red flags in Lloyd's tender green ones. The young Ninja had been through more than enough to know all was not what it seemed, and that Yana played as a mere pawn in some grander game. A game that he and Clancee were now intertwined with, and if they didn't play their cards right, one that could spell game over all too soon.

***Finally… he is here.*** So much time, so much plotting, so much… hatred. Those miserable excuses for heroes… those pathetic little Ninja! I wouldn't be stranded on this pitiful mountain if it weren't for them and their meddling ways. They've left me broken… disgraced, so far fallen from the glorious ruler I should be!

I was rather hoping they had all found their way up to my sanctuary. Alas, singling out their little green saviour of a leader is a strong start. The time has come. The ceremony isn't far off, and my time as the rightful ruler I am is upon us. Soon, the Green Ninja will be nothing more than a mere legend, a relic of a bygone era.

***Soon, there will be only me and my kingdom.***

# CHAPTER 13

***Lloyd was pacing back and forth.*** The room was small but adequate for both himself and Clancee. He felt responsible for the serpentine and their fates were now linked for better or worse. As much as he wanted to be alone with his thoughts he did not feel safe here and he would be ready to protect Clancee if it came to that. Lloyd was glad they shared a room, awkward as it was.
Clancee was lying in a thick mattress on a bed carved from ice. Ironically he had similar thoughts. He wanted to be alone but knew this was safer. The piece of paper he had secretly tucked inside his vest was eating away at his mind and he desperately wanted to inspect it closer. It had shook him to his core. There was doom and promises of bad things to happen implied in the words written on the scrap. He had aways insited is important to keep a positive outlook on things, but given the circumstances it was hard. Lloyd's pacing back and forth offered him no peace so he just had to wait. He decided to break the silence.
*'Ssso this is nice! Y-you hardly feel the c-c-old, the mattress is nice and the mu-mu-music is so-so soothing.'*
Lloyd promptly changed the subject.
*'Did you notice her eyes? Did something feel off to you about her? Yana I mean?'*
Clancee cleared his throat. *'Do you mean how they seemed to project a peace which is only found in people with complete faith and confidence in their leader? The way there was no hint of doubt, regret or insecurity in the words she spoke or the way she spoke them? The way she moved like her entire being had only a single purpose and the way she carried herself was with an ease and grace that only a person which has found their true purpose and has no desire to pursue any other goal? An individual who is truly fulfilled!'*
Lloyd stopped dead in his tracks. Not only was it the sheer length of Clancee's monologue, but it was the complete lack of stutter and seemingly profound insight into the mind of a person he had only just met. Lloyd hadn't been able to articulate it to himself, but what Clancee had said just said rang true and had it his gears spinning. He had figured out most of Clancee's personality he had thought to himself. Clancee has great devotion to whatever he attaches himself to, so of course he would have some insight into how one acts when they are a true follower. But there was still something about Yana that seemed to be beyond that.
*'Do you think that she is here of her own free will Clancee?*

*Something about her eyes ...'*
Lloyd thought back to his encounters with the Hypnobrai all those years ago. Eyes are said to be a window to the soul, and he clearly remembered seeing souls suppressed in the eyes of those who fell to their hypnotic gaze. His uncle had even told him about how the Master of Earth had turned on the Elemental Alliance during a crucial battle during the Serpentine War. He knew how the vapours of the Venomaris' acidic poison could warp reality. He wondered how much Clancee knew about such things. But still this was different. It was more like she was enchanted, seduced by a being of a higher intellect ... or something like that.
*'I-i-i thought she was real pretty. And I liked the way she looked at Peggy. B-but you are right. It is rare to see eyes like that. It was like they were tr-tr-tr-trying to tell you everything but force to reveal nothing'.*
Lloyd pondered this for a second and then summed up what he knew: They were strangers in a strange place. People who were desperately clinging on to hope came here and what they found was what appeared to be a fully functional society built inside Ninjago's highest mountain ... and it just happened also be the temple of former Masters of Ice. He had seen enough strange things in his short life to be suspicious and expect the worst. He knew what he needed to do.
*'Clancee ... we need to check this place out. And we need to do it right now. If there is anything fishy going on we need to know about it so we're alert and prepared.'*
Clancee's mind was spinning. He had not meant to make Lloyd feel unsafe here but the determination of his words had Clancee's thoughts starting to darken too ... and then there was that small scrap of paper which kept creeping into his mind. Luckily Lloyd seemed to pick up on his insecurity and made a decision so Clancee didn't have to.
*'You stay here ... I'll head out to investigate. Make sure you keep making some noise though. They may be checking on us, so we need to pretend we're both in the room.'*
Clancee was in two minds. He did like being abandoned his new-found friend, but he also knew that one of them was a trained ninja and he himself was not.
*'I-i-i'll just be speaking to Peggy then!',* Clancee said and gave his peg-leg a twirl. *'We have se-se-seen a lot these last fe-few days and have hardly spoken. Bu-bu-but do be careful please Master Lloyd!'*

Lloyd nodded and slipped out the door. He couldn't help but smile as he hear the muffled voice of Clancee start his imaginary conversation with himself ... or Peggy. Whatever!

It was darker now somehow. Not completely dark. Light still bounced off reflective surfaces and ran across the icy catwalks which connected the habitats of this strange village. There was still music playing but it was much less imposing now, almost like a lullaby played to keep a child feel safe and secure. The sounds of chimes and gentle strings echoed between the walls and Lloyd found himself more at ease. Maybe this place was alright and one too many bad experience had left him jaded and insensitive to wonders and joy. His mind instinctively wandered to Harumi but he shook away the image in pain.
He could not let his mind be clouded now. Either this place was fine or it was not. He would have to see for himself.

*'**Ye-yes! The mattress is very soft Peg - I mean Lloyd!**'*
Clancee found it hard to keep up the charade. He felt bad about not addressing Peggy by name and he was rapidly running out of subjects to talk about. But he kept going. He had made a promise to Lloyd. He came up with a new subject.
*'Why yesss! I do enjoy po-po-poetry. I fact I have written one myself just recently. Why, I have it right here. Let me show you!'*
He sat up at the edge of the bed and with trembling hands reached inside his vest and took out the folded piece of paper. He unfolded it and swallowed hard. Time for a second look...
A tap on the door and a gentle voice startled him. With a loud yelp he fell over backward. Yana's voice rang out.
'*Green Saviour Lloyd and Pirate Clancee. Are you OK in there? I have brought you some warm tea and sweets. Compliments of the Wishmaster'.*
Clancee gathered himself as quickly as he could, tucked the paper back inside his vest and ran to the door.
*'Ma-ma-many thanks! You can ju-ju-just leave it outside. Master Lloyd is sound asleep and I wo-wo-wouldn't want to wake him.'*
After what felt like an eternity Yana responded and Clancee heard a tray be put down outside the door. He waited for the steps to fade away before he opened the door and claimed the tray.
He hoped that he had done good and that Lloyd's was doing better. He looked down at Peggy and felt less alone.

# CHAPTER 14

***'Clancee my dear boy…'*** An echoing that had rung between the verses of the village's angelic chimes continued to prey on Clancee's paranoia, a feeling only intensified with Lloyd now exploring the village. This feeling was only further escalated by not knowing the consequences that would await them should something go wrong. His former captain Nadakhan would often tell those who wronged him and his diverse crew that "actions have consequence", a warning given before those who received it experienced the brutality of the Djinn captain. Clancee had since made it his top priority to never step out of line, to keep his head down and to work hard with Moppy to keep everyone around him happy, yet had been forever haunted with a tainted perception of what happened to those who would do the opposite.

Lloyd had been gone for just over an hour now, an hour made all the more unnerving by the endless calls reaching out to the hyper vigilant serpent. Yet, what shook Clancee to his core more so than anything else was the voice itself, so much so that he had missed the context of the whispers entirely. He knew well and clear who was calling out to him. They had just so happened to be one of the few faces he had come all this way to find, and was the only person in his lifetime to ever refer to Clancee as "dear boy". As he struggled to balance out his thoughts and feelings of confusion, paranoia, and excitement, he dug into his vest once again to inspect the frail and folded piece of paper that continued to plague his thoughts. Much to his dismay, his eyes did not deceive him. The writings on the crumbled sheet correlated to the new-found voice that filled the brief moments of silence in ways the serpent thought impossible. He couldn't make sense of what he was seeing, but he knew his journey up the treacherous Wailing Alps was not going to be a journey in vain, yet also knew that he was not going to achieve anything by simply sitting idle waiting for Lloyd's return. Despite his faith in Lloyd and dedication to his companion's plan, Clancee grew eager to go out on his own and find what it is he sought out so dearly. In true Clancee fashion, he looked down to his trusty peg leg and pondered the questions he was too uncertain to answer o*n his own.*

*'W-w-what do you think Clancee should do P-Peggy?'* he queried, *'Should we w-wait for Master Lloyd, or s-should we go on a li-li-little scavenger hunt of our o-own? I w-want to find my friends all on my o-own, to m-make the ol' crew p-proud! B-but I don't think that… I don't think that Clancee is strong enough to go out all on his lonesome…'* As his doubts and insecurities began to get the

best of him, Clancee was quick to conjure up a smile and see the light at the end of the ever-expanding tunnel.
'*Y-you're right Peggy!'* he exclaimed. *'Clancee will have some of that t-t-tea and see how I f-feel then! A good b-beverage always helps Clancee t-think much better! I can a-always count on you to help P-Peggy, that's why you're Clancee's f-favorite!'*
The ever-so-slightly comforted serpent picked up the brew brought to him by Yana, sipping it slowly and cautiously, opting to not spill and waste such a divine brew. Left with an empty cup and a warm belly, Clancee briefly closed his eyes and cleared his head, forming his next actions ever so carefully.

***'He is here my master.*** *The Green Ninja, leader of the legendary Ninja of Ninjago that graced your presence way back when. I escorted him to his accommodation just as you asked. The ceremony is in preparation and will be ready for commencement come nightfall tomorrow. But he wasn't alone. Alongside him walked a Serpentine, one of bright green scales and a mumbled manner of speech. I believe he is the one you have been looking for. The one your entrusted guards have spoken of. He has been accommodated alongside young Garmadon for the time being. How do you wish to proceed, my gracious king?'*

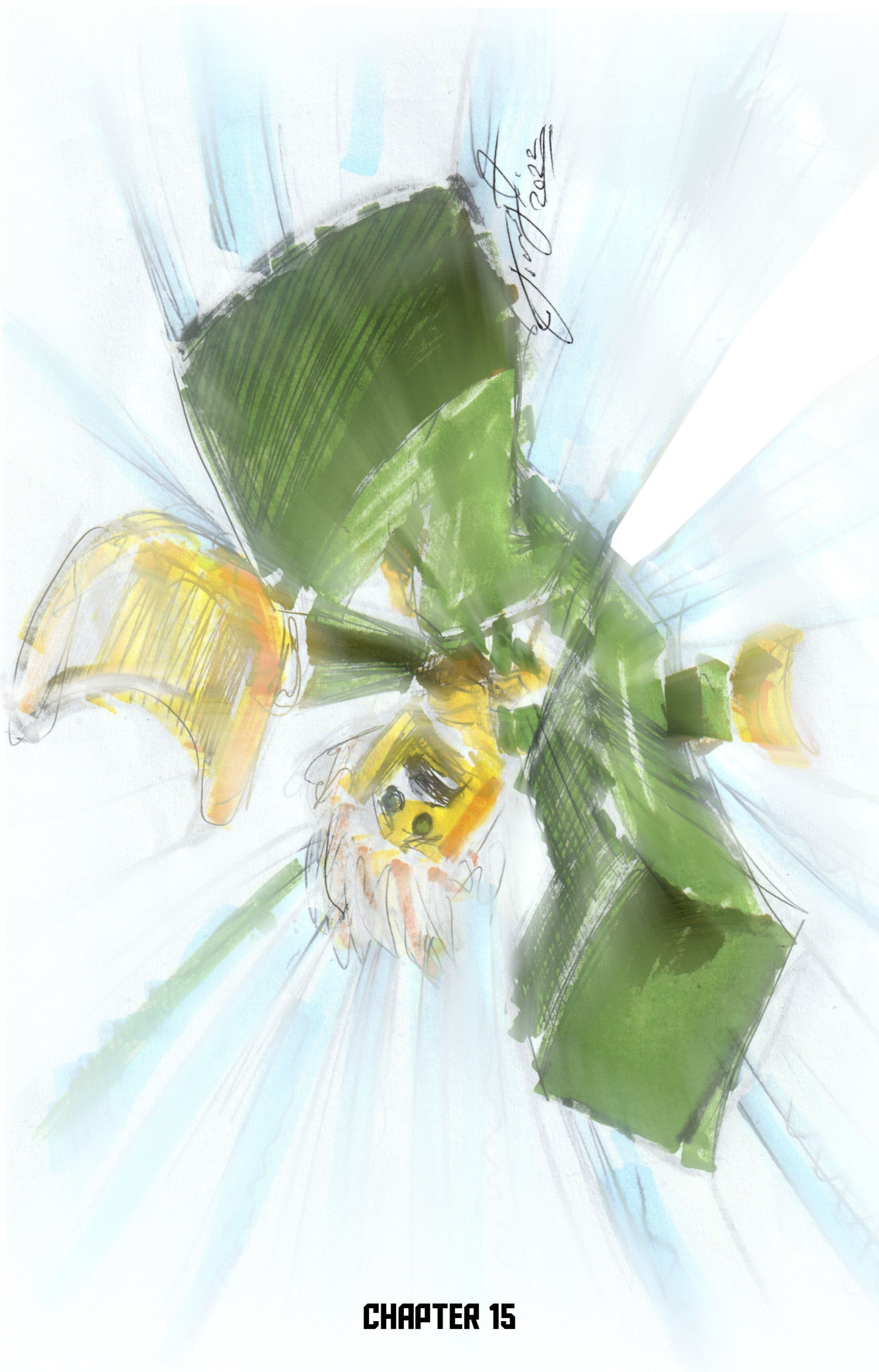
***'Your wish is yours to keep…'*** Clancee's eyes shot open as he lunged forward from the ice-carved bed. He wasn't sure if it was Yana's brew or simply his own recollection of the moment, but he had just relived his recruitment into Nadakhan's crew as if it had played out just in front of him, as clear and vivid as the moment itself. Clancee took a moment to come to his senses and decide his next course of action. He clenched his fist and looked down to Peggy for a seal of approval.
*'My apologies, Master Lloyd…'* he faintly whispered.
*'Clancee knows what he needs to do.'* The serpent quietly and cautiously left his quarters, continuously monitoring his surroundings for guards and other forms of security. Yet he quickly realized he was at an immediate disadvantage, as his less-than-adequate vision did not do him many favours in a near pitch black setting. Par a few dimly lit torches scattered across the village habitats, the only source of light faintly illuminated from the opaque icy catwalks. As he began to make his way out into the village, the whispers that had brought him out of his hut grew louder and more prominent. Were these whispers falling upon deaf ears across the

rest of the village? Or was Clancee conjuring up voices from the past to keep himself motivated? Not even he was sure at this point. But he knew the voice, and it was one he had placed ample trust in over the years, meaning his march forward was a relentless one. What he was not prepared for was for the voice to begin acting as a guide through the darkened village. A guide that was leading him somewhere close by.

*'Closer Clancee, my dear boy. Follow my voice…'*

Clancee continued to follow the ghost-like presence. After detouring through the majority of the village, the serpent happened upon a staircase that led to a dark, decrepit basement-like area. Filled with artefacts and furniture, Clancee cautiously made his way around any and all obstacles in his way, determined to not break anything that may have spelled his and Lloyd's doom. The whispers grew louder and louder as Clancee made his way across the room, increasing both his paranoia and chances of unintentionally breaking something nearby. After making his way through what felt like an endless maze of a room, Clancee arrived at a small wooden door at the far end of the basement. There, the whispers stopped all together. Silence filled the entirety of the room, prompting Clancee's paranoia and anxiety to sky-rocket once again. He couldn't shake the feeling that what he had come so far in search of laid just beyond the withering door. Clancee clenched his fist once again, shared a nervous-yet-determined glance with Peggy, and pushed the door open. What laid in front of him was nothing he hadn't seen a thousand times scattered across the Misfortune's Keep years prior. Gold, trinkets, gems, artefacts of varied ages… it resonated a sense of comfort for the homesick serpent. Yet upon closer inspection, one particular artefact stood out above all others. One that made the serpent's stomach drop, and brought him to his knees. His suspicions had all just been confirmed. He knew why he was guided here.

Before him laid a grazed and damaged teapot. One with a dented handle and a crooked spout. One that once imprisoned his mighty captain… the Teapot of Tyrahn. And based on first looks, Clancee believed it had been used once more. He believed that his former captain Nadakhan had been set free, and now went by a new alias: The Wishmaster. Yet in the midst of his sheer disbelief over what laid in front of him, the dumbfounded serpent felt the muzzle of an all-too familiar musket greet the back of his head.



# CHAPTER 15

***There were hardly any people around.*** Lloyd didn't let down his guard though. He was trespassing in strange place and he had been drawn there in a way which felt somewhat beyond his control. He had acted upon rumours and selfish desires. This wasn't like him, but done was done and he had to find out about this place. He did hope there were truth to the rumours and that we might find solace in whatever the Wishmaster had to offer him. He felt the weight of the sword on his back and was not sure he was justified in bringing it along. There was nothing to suggest that there was anything wrong with this place except what felt like a gaping hole in his stomach ... and that strange feeling that those strange blue eyes of Yana's held some sort of riddle to be solved.

Lloyd snuck up to an alcove and peeked around the corner. A few people were huddled around a strange glowing crystal like it was a bonfire. They were clothed in similar simple garments like Yana and were engaged in quiet conversation. A woman sang quietly in the rhythm of the music.
He considered briefly to approach them to ask some questions but decided he was better off keeping his scrutiny of the place a secret for now and stepped backwards. At least they seemed content enough and were clearly here of their own free will.
His gaze travelled up and down the icy catwalks. The scale of the place struck him again and it was clear that he would never be able to investigate the entire place.
He decided to travel upwards. If the Wishmaster was the ruler, benign or not, he would most likely have his residence at the very top. That is, if normal logic applied to this society. Lloyd wasn't sure.

He made his way up a few catwalks and a few times dodged behind ice pillars when a sound would startle him. He felt silly doing so, as the ice was clear and was more likely to reveal him as a much larger refraction. It felt like his ninja instincts were working against him and it gave him a headache trying to work out the best course of action.

The next few levels up were much like the ones below and it made him question whether he had made the right decision. There were beautiful carvings in some of the pillars though, so maybe he was on the right track. He ducked behind another pillar as

he heard murmured speaking and again he felt silly. To persons walked by on a catwalk above him and though he could not make out their conversation, he could see though distorted by the ice, that their clothes were more ornate that what he had seen people wear on the lower levels. So, there was a hierarchically structure to this place! It made Lloyd feel some comfort knowing there was something familiar to trust here.
He took a closer look at the carefully crafted patterns on the pillars. They were both disturbing and an beautiful at the same time and again it suggested much work had gone into them, and that the upper levels were reserved for a higher class of denizens.

A movement in Lloyd's peripheral vision caught his attention. It was Yana. He had already pegged her as a lower ranking servant because of her simple clothes, but still she was up here. She was making her way across a catwalk stretching away from his own, but it was no longer than twelve feet way. Lloyd waited until she had disappeared out of sight and mustered up all of his courage. The leap wouldn't be that far, but the surfaces were slippery. It was risky. Still he did it.
He ran to the very edge and used it to propel himself forward. He cleared the modest distance with ease, but upon landing he slid forward uncontrollably. He had fractions of a seconds to act but his ninja instinct and reflexes kicked in and served him well. In a deft move he unsheathed his sword from his back and jammed it into the icy surface. A loud crack sounded as the ice split and a scurrying sound echoed throughout the inside of the mountain. Lloyd forced the sword down hard and came to a halt dangling over the edge. He looked down. Hundreds of feet below the details of the architecture blurred into a dizzying mess of white. He quickly pulled himself up and rolled for cover finding a small mound of snow. From there he could see several persons appear from alcoves. He held his breath and kept perfectly still. After a few moments they receded back to where they had come from and returned to whatever they were doing. Lloyd breathed as sigh of relief and looked towards where Yana had disappeared.

***Nothing escapes my attention.*** I may not have the sight I used to, but my other senses and knowledge about this place are shaper than ever. The the loud crack was a sign that the green one will be coming my way ... and I welcome him. He has no idea

what he is heading into and I can't wait to let him know. I have made arrangements for his arrival. I have felt on my own body the horrors he will witness ... and endure if he doesn't do as I wish. I am the Wishmaster and if I don't get my way there will be a price to be paid.

***After another few moments Lloyd stood up*** and brushed the cold snow off his clothes. He knew he had gotten lucky in more ways than one, but he shook away the feeling of dread of this near death experience. It's not like he hadn't had dozens before. Sheathing the sword he made his way onward, this time with new-found caution and respect for the ice beneath his feet.
Yana was brushing his long dark hair in front of perfectly polished ice crystal which worked as a mirror and made Lloyd gaze into those enigmatic blue eyes again. He couldn't help but feel some admiration. She was beautiful, that was for sure.
Another strange mix of pain, shame and regret hit him like a fist to the chest as images of a beautiful green-clad princess removed white paint from her face. He suppressed the gasp he had given him away the last time. This was wrong! Whatever he was doing here was wrong! It had nearly cost him his life and now he felt like a bit of a creep as well. He did not know which was worse, but at least he could do something about the creep part.
He backed away and decided to head back to Clancee. He had learned what he could for now, and he would need to be rested for whatever would happen tomorrow.
But then he heard some commotion above him. A small group of people were walking an odd pace. Almost like they kept moving and stopping. Moving and stopping. He couldn't make out much detail at this distance, but the colours of their clothes did not match, each wearing a colour of their own.
This might have been the lead he had been looking for. He quickly made his way a few levels up, but realized that he exposing himself too much trying to catch up. He leaned out to get a better look. He shouldn't have. His eagerness to catch a conclusive glimpse of the group had betrayed him. He Slipped. He swallowed a silent scream. And fell.

The last thing Lloyd saw was his own distorted reflection coming right at him. His face wore an expression of absolute horror and panic. Then all the white turned dark.

# CHAPTER 16

***'Will I remember this?'***
*'You will think it was a dream. In time, you will forget all about it.'*
*'…Before I go… how can I save him?'*

***'HOLY SPINJITZU!'*** An energetic high-pitched scream filled the small ice-carved hut and echoed through the opaque walls. Entirely lost in a whirlpool of thoughts and memories of the fallen Harumi, Lloyd unwillingly emitted an even higher-pitched scream out of simple shock, one which launched him up from the ice-sculpted bed and landed him back on his feet.
*'Woah! Sorry to startle you there Greenie! Aren't you Ninja meant to be all vigilant and hyperaware and stuff like that though?'*
Before Lloyd stood a bright and quirky young woman with long silver hair and who seemingly had donned her own Ninja Gi. She sported a big smile, a stark contrast to Lloyd's current state. Her personality vaguely reminded him of his bumbling travel companion.
*'Man, I can't believe you're actually alive thou… AWAKE! I meant awake! You were pretty bent out of shape when we found you half dead on the walkways. You're just lucky we found you when we did! Looks like I owe Yuuki a fiver!'*
Convinced his new acquaintance didn't breathe once during her spiel, Lloyd simply stood on in silence, fighting to untangle himself from the blankets and bandages that, he found, encased him.
*'Boy, you look like a Boogie-Woogie Bear who's lost his groove! Here, let me help you out with that.'*

***'Very good Yana.*** *You have exceeded my modest expectations time and time again. My imminent rule draws ever so near, yet my patience begins to wear thin. I had hoped the boy would have found his way to my grace as if it were child's play. Perhaps I have placed too much faith in such a husk of a mere child? Even so, once he crosses the threshold and grants the sole wish of the Wishmaster, a new age shall be set into motion. The age of the Wishmaster.'*

***Minutes had passed*** since Lloyd had been freed from his self-inflicted restraints. His new acquittance had brewed the pair a batch of durian-brew tea. As a wooded-carved cup was placed in front of him, Lloyd's attention seemingly drifted into the cadmium-coloured brew, his mind still wrapped around his ever-growing concerns for Clancee.
*'What's the matter? Not a big tea belly?'*
Lloyd was promptly snapped back to reality once again, not even

aware he had spaced out to begin with.
*'The taste comes and goes.',* he responded, *'This fever-dream I have sometimes about some bizarre rivalry running a tea shop for my uncle puts me off.'*
An awkward silence fell among the two, neither one being able to transition away from Lloyd's ramblings.
'*So, what's your story?'* Lloyd finally asked.
*'Well I'm glad you asked!'* she excitedly exclaimed as she set down her teacup.
*'Name's Pokee: Ninja in training, geographical and linguistics know-it-all and esteemed member of Yogen Mura! We made our way to little old Yogen here some time back to track down the legendary Wishmaster. Once word starting circling around, we made that nasty climb in hopes they could turn my wish into a reality! Kinda like one of those… what do you call them again? Djinn fellas?'*
It was no secret from the beginning that whoever made the climb up the Wailing Alps did so to have some deep desire manifested into a reality, Lloyd being no exception.
*'Your wish?'* he responded, knowing Pokee would not share his reluctance in revealing what she had pursued to relentlessly.
*'Well to further my training in becoming a Ninja and to hopefully join the big leagues one day, my wish is to become the next Elemental Master of Wind! I've occasionally been able to throw around little wind currents, like the power's already there to some degree. I'm just hoping the Wishmaster can help me prove that is isn't something to fear… people tend to fear Wind following the fall of that Stiix city. Do you think it's really possible to grant such a wish? Not that it would matter, the Wishmaster can do anything! I heard that they…'*
Pokee's voice faded to nothingness as Lloyd's stomach dropped. The nightmares of Morro's possession suddenly overflowed his mind all at once, only accompanied by the scattered thoughts of attempting to make sense of such an unlikely scenario.
Is this Pokee related to Morro in some way? The thought echoed in Lloyd's mind. Or… is the Wishmaster actually capable of passing on an Elemental Power to someone of a different heritage? With a power like that…
*'HEY!' Pokee suddenly shouted. 'You still with me Greenie? Or are you talking to someone else like when you were out cold? I mean I talk to my friend I share my body with all the time, but there's a time and place!'*
As if it had become habit, Pokee had caught Lloyd's attention once more. Like a flame had been lit beneath him and a newfound motivation

had unveiled itself, Lloyd shot up from the glistening bed, wobbled over to his neatly-rested belongings and donned his pine-shaded cloak.
*'Easy there Greenie!'* Pokee protested, *'You can't just spring back into action so quickly! Your wounds still have a tone of healing to do!'* Yet her words more or less fell upon deaf ears as Lloyd was all but out the shelter's jagged doorway. *'Sorry Pokee' he promptly responded, 'but I can't afford to lose anymore time. I greatly appreciate your hospitality and all, I really do, but before that careless fall I noticed an ally of mine being taken somewhere against his will, and I can all but guess as to where he's being taken.'* Like a sudden realisation had sunk into Pokee's mind, she shot up from the small wooden stool that sat parallel to the icy bed. '*Don't tell me…' she responded, '…you're going to try to reach the Wishmaster on your own?'*
A brief silence fell among the two, with Lloyd all but ready to make way, yet stumbled into hesitation when Pokee's chipper demeanour fell into one of concern. *'I have no choice, I need to save Clan…'* Lloyd began to respond before being cut off by a wary Pokee.
'*NO! You can't!'* she exclaimed, prompting Lloyd to quickly turn back and face her.
*'Can't? Why not?'* he queried. A tense atmosphere had filled the already miniscule quarters. *'That's not how it works here in little Yogen Mura, it's dangerous!'* she frantically responded, *'if they find you… i-it doesn't matter! Just lay back down and continue to rest, I'll introduce you to all of our lovely residents! Oh you'll love them! There's Rain and Zoro and Wavern and…'* Lloyd was quick to intervene, uneased by Pokee's sudden warnings. *'Pokee, what do you mean 'not how it works?' Who is it you're so afraid of disobeying?'*
As if on cue, Lloyd felt a pressure point greet the back of his all-too exposed head. A round surface followed by an audible click. Without a single visual cue, Lloyd knew exactly who had caught him with his guard down. As a frightened look swallowed Pokee's face whole, Lloyd knew his only viable move was to drop his golden blade and slowly raise his hands.
*'Greenie…?'* she trembled.
*'It's okay, don't worry.'* Lloyd calmly responded before opting to address the musket pressed to the back of his head.
*'Long time no see, Flintlocke. I take it the whole crew went against that deal on the Dark Island then?'*
*'Been through a lot since our last littl' scuffle, been granted an all-new purpose since then. Now if you'd be so kind, the Wishmaster would very much like a good ol' face-to-face…'*

# CHAPTER 17

***The orchestra of hushed bells and chimes*** which harmonize across the now-darkened village grace every last inch of this astonishing community. Had the circumstances been any different, part of me believes I could find myself at peace within these walls.
A quiet life of calmness and tranquillity, one that no longer yearns for me to don the green gi I have worn for all these years. Is it selfish to desire such a life? To crave simple harmony despite the immense burdens that lay on my shoulders? When I think of the others… my mother… Master Wu… we have all been fighting for so long. All endured and overcame so much grief and trauma. At what point is it okay to crave a life where a pain like that can no longer find you? These are the questions and thoughts that crowd my mind as I home in on why I am here. The selfish desire that I cannot form into a reality with my own two hands. Is wishing for something so personal and self-centred going against the ethos of being the Green Ninja? Is it… really possible to save him?

As we continue to ascend the village walkways, I notice each level of the city appearing more pristine and divine then the last, all bathed in an angelic-like glow radiating from the highest point. The gentle cacophony of luscious music that echoes throughout seems to get louder the higher we reach, yet never seems to originate from one direct spot. These upper levels stand a stark contrast from where Clancee and I were greeted upon arrival, as if a higher-class society co-exists alongside the less-pristine grounds at the base of the village. If this place had been built up in such a sense, the Wishmaster's society within the mountain is one of thorough planning and design. Trying to make sense of it all while navigating the endless smooth and jagged catwalks proves a challenging feat, one only amplified with a loaded musket in the hands of a trigger-happy pirate pressed against the back of my head.
*'So is it him?'* Lloyd abruptly queried, killing the lingering silence that had befallen the two since exiting Pokee's hut.
*'Him? And who might "he" be?'* Flintlocke mockingly queried, as if he wanted to hear Lloyd expel the name himself.
*'Your captain… Nadakhan. Clancee wasn't exactly coy about their shared attribute of granting wishes, seems like a seamless connection to make.'* Another brief silence fell among the two, one elongated by Flintlocke's intent to let Lloyd's paranoia grow.
*'We left that island with the goal of finding the ol' captain, crew's gotta watch over one another till the ship they steer goes down after*

*all…'* the gun-wielding pirate finally responded, *'…yet we ended up finding more then we bargained for up this deceiving ol' rock. Stumbled upon a whole new purpose in a world no longer built for a pirate. He pulled us in from a one-way trip to Wojira's Cradle, and after today, you'll all fall in line under his guidance.'*

Flintlocke's ominous words left Lloyd with a deep pit in his stomach. Despite their limited interactions, he was quick to pick out that the swashbuckling sharpshooter was not within his typical character. *'Flintlocke… you're not yourself. Where's Clancee? What's going on with this village?!'* Lloyd attempted to turn back his head to face his captor head-on, yet was directed to do otherwise and face forward with an audible click from the musket just behind him.

*'You're about to find out Green Ninja…'* As if returning to reality from a troublesome daydream, Lloyd ran short of breath as the two were greeted by a set of divine white and golden doors. While Lloyd silently fought to collect his thoughts and prepare himself for what laid beyond the doors just in front of him, the doors slowly and silently split apart, releasing a small burst of white fog that elegantly coated the floor. As the doors shifted open until they couldn't any further, a cloaked figure gracefully emerged from the fog to greet the weary traveller. *'Greetings Green Savior Lloyd. It is an honor to have you grace our presence atop the clouds of Yogen Mura.'* The second the words danced off the hooded figure's lips, Lloyd had their identity placed. The illusive Yana lowered her hood and bowed. '*If you please follow me.'* Gesturing the pair to follow, she led Lloyd to the centre of a luscious, gold-coated room decorated by pillars and wall-hung scrolls that blew gently in the breeze. Behind them stood a mahogany-shaded curtain that circled the entire room, decorated with golden floral designs from one end to another. Yet Lloyd's attention was immediately drawn to the solid-gold throne that laid at the centre of the room, one occupied by a hooded figure donned in an immaculately clean, glistening robe. Lloyd's emerald-green eyes locked on to the figure and refused to drift elsewhere. After everything endured from the tavern at the base of the mountain, after living in constant doubt over his entire journey to the Hanging Temple… the moment had seemingly arrived. The Wishmaster sat mere inches from Lloyd's very presence.

From just behind him emerged Flintlocke and Yana, the latter of which elegantly wandered to just beside the room's central throne, while Flintlocke seemingly vanished behind the deep-red curtain. Trying to process all that had just transpired, Lloyd continued to fixate

his gaze on the golden throne, specifically the being who tenanted it.
'*Lloyd Montgomery Garmadon…'* Yana calmly spoke, '*you are now in the presence of the all-giving Wishmaster. May you find peace within the wishes granted to you on this divine day.'*
Lloyd felt a sinister sensation consume him whole, as old Gertrude's words of warning rang throughout his head for the first time since departing the tavern, words that had nearly marked the end of his journey before it even began. *'Find no trust nor peace within the wishes of the Wishmaster. Or your only wish will be that you didn't turn back sooner…'*
*'Kneel, child.'* A calm yet unruly voice emerged from the cloaked Wishmaster, one demanding the uneased Green Ninja drop to a single knee. Insistent on getting the answers he craved, Lloyd slowly and hesitantly dropped down to his left knee before loudly pondering the question that had plagued his thoughts since he had even left the Monastery. *'Who… who are you?'* A grim silence graced across the room, one that prompted small beads of sweat to drip from even the stoic Yana's forehead.
*'You seek name? I am* ***The Wishmaster****…* ***The Master Writer****…* ***The Head Scripe ... The Letterer of Destiny ...*** *but for you child, I shall make an exception. I shall allow you to address me by the name that died the day I was banished from my kingdom. Perhaps you recall it, or perhaps it has since faded to obscurity. We did only meet for a brief time, one where your body and mind fell hostage to that of a vengeful entity. Tell me child… does the name* ***Fenwick*** *still occupy that fractured mind of yours?'*
The figure lowered his hood to reveal an elder face that had been torn in two, leaving but bone and scarred tissue to occupy so much of what had once been a royal monk. As Lloyd struggled to comprehend the revelation just before him, Fenwick rose up from his throne and made his way towards the bowing ninja, circling him like a Ravture that had just caught its prey.

'*Tell me Green Ninja… what desperate lengths have led you to seek my presence as such? What piece of your ever-so tragic existence are you pleading me to mend? What is the peace you seek within my wishes?'* As if it were torture, Lloyd fought past the doubt and uncertainty that had swallowed him whole, as he made his drive for this entire journey all too clear.
*'I need your help… to save him. To restore the man he was before I lost him. I need to… to save my father… I need to bring him back.'*

# CHAPTER 18

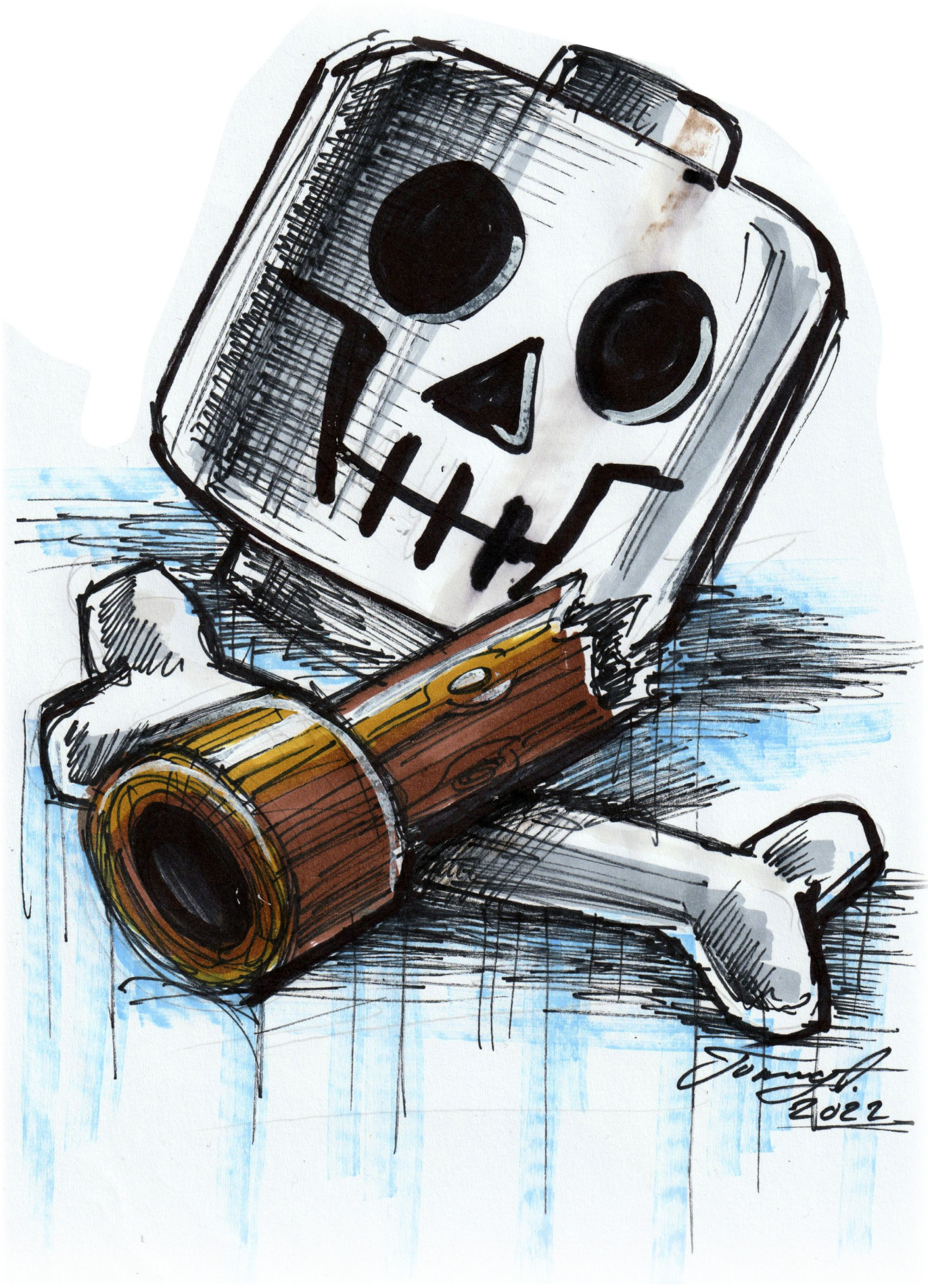
***Fenwick smiled.*** This was most interesting, amusing even. He had run the scenario trough is mind a thousand times: What would it be like when one of his targets eventually found their way to him? What would be said and would he grant a wish? But this was much different from anything he had imagined.
The young green-eyed boy had just requested the one wish he could not grant even if he wanted to. Fenwick knew the boy's father well. Not personally, but he had been watching him with great interest for millennia. But Garmadon was an Oni and not of this world and Oni were well beyond his ability to affect with his quill and scrolls.
He decided to play toy around with Lloyd before revealing his true intentions.
*'You have family trouble and desire to fix it. That is a worthy wish. I know of family trouble well. I had a brother once. We ruled a Kingdom as equals. But we had a falling out. Brothers seem to have that happen to them. I think you know well from your own family. You see, we didn't see eye to eye on the idea of free-will. He was soft and felt people should be free to forge their own path ... Create their own destiny. But people are weak minded and weak willed. They need to be governed. There needs to be a master plan for them or everything will descend into anarchy and chaos. The bigger picture is greater than that of the individual, and that is why I had to get rid of him. I banished him from our Kingdom and bent his mind. He was my brother and I loved him once, but Quanish was an idealistic fool and he got what was coming to him. As will you young Garamdon!'*
Lloyd fully realized at that moment that the man before him was not a benign greater of wisher, but rather a petty and vengeful tyrant.
He scanned to room ... Clancee, Yana, Fenwick ... and Flintlocke would be nearby with his loaded musket. He was just about to make a move but hesitated as the sound of heavy footsteps rang through the room. Flintlocke entered again followed by the massive Dogshank, the two-faced Dubloon and Monkey Wretch who leapt coyly between them.
A happy voice rang out as Clancee entered the room.
*"Ma-ma-master Lloyd ... My friends! They are he-he-here! My wish as already come true!'*
Lloyd cursed inside himself. Clancee had clearly not understood the seriousness of their situation and beamed with joy and excitement. Lloyd abandoned his idea of attacking. It was too risky now and inocentnts may get hurt. He turned his attention back to Fenwick.
*'So, who are you ... and how are you granting people's wishes?'*
Fenwick was not in the mood to tell his life's story ... it was a long

one, but then again, it was much more fun if Lloyd knew more about who he was and how hopeless his situation was.
*'I am Fenwick. Once ruler of Cloud Kingdom. I was so for millennia until you and your little band of meddling brats saw an end to it. You were there in body but not in spirit. You friends unleashed a beast upon me and I had to flee...'*

***Fenwick ran as fast as he could.*** Moments before he had been watching with glee as the magnificent creature Nimbus shook a Cloud Kingdom skiff with four screaming ninja in it. But then suddenly Nimbus shifted its attention and lunged at him. Even as he ran for his life, his head exploded with thoughts on what may have happened. He had made a deal with Morro and his destiny was secure, but now this happened! Nobu! He had only taken on the boy as his apprentice because he reminded him of his own brother when he was young. But Nobu had quickly shown himself to be more like Quanish than was advantageous. He thought had that he had quenched that part in the boy, but now with the fouls stench of Nimbus' breath chasing him, he realized that he had not. What transpired now was clearly the work of Nobu's hand. He had seemed concerned earlier when he had been introduced to Morro, Bansha and Soul Archer. Fenwick cursed himself for not being more careful.
Nimbus' giant claw swung at him and he narrowly dodged out of the was before he was struck. The force of the blow tripped up Nimbus who fell over with high pitched squeal. Fenwick looked back. The creature had always been docile to him, he had made sure to have one of his scribes add that part in his own destiny, but now it had clearly been altered. Nobu! Fenwick sped up and ran for the main library. If he could just get to his scroll and get someone to correct it, this would all be fine. And then he would discipline Nobu adequately ... like he had his brother.
Inside the library scribes were hunched over their desks working away of the Ninjagan denizens' destinies as usual. They were unaware of the commotion which had happened outside. Fenwick caught his breath, corrected his posture and started to walk calmly down the centre isle scanning the impossibly tall shelves of destiny scrolls. Nobu was nowhere to be found but at his desk Fenwick found just what he wanted: His own destiny altered by the brat's feeble hand. Fenwick glanced over to the shelves. Over the years he had gathered a small collection of scrolls for people he had a certain fondness of. The people, a small handful of pirates, who had been very amusing to toy around with about 200 years ago, but had then gone missing

under unfortunate circumstances, were now beyond his reach. But he knew of ways to bring them back. They might become useful to him given his new situation so grabbed their scrolls. And the way to bring them back was this one scroll which, in large ornamented letters read 'Clouse'. Fenwick grabbed the stack including a few black pages and walked quickly out through the large doors at the other end of the hall. He was starting to feel confident that he could turn this sitaution to his advantage. But just then a sharp pain pierced his body as half his face was torn off by the claws of the mighty Nimbus. The creature lunged at him. Fenwick staggered back half blinded ... and then both fell over the side of the elevated path which connected the floating temples of Cloud Kingdom. Together fell into the clouds below.

***'I was the head scribe of Cloud Kingdom.*** *I controlled people's destinies. Your lot took that away from me. I narrowly escaped ... not unscathed as you see. I found this place and used the scrolls I brought with me to alter a few key persons destinies to bring them to me. Useful people who wouldn't be missed anywhere like this sad lot.'*
He gestured to the pirates who squirmed at the sound of his words.
*'I am the Wishmaster, and you wish you'd never come here, much like most of the pitiful souls who has trekked up this mountain. I have been granting them what they think are wishes. But in fact I have merely steered their destinies a bit and now the rumours of their good fortune has brought you here. You will do what I ask of your own free will and what I ask of you is a simple task:*
*Climb to the summit. The storm will be passing soon. Use you Arijiztu skills to venture to Cloud Kingdom. You can do it! You did it before when Morro was inside you. You will bring me that traitorous Nobu! And then I will have him undo the damage he did to my destiny.*
*Then I will let you go knowing that you did a good job for the future ruler of Ninjago. There is no danger in Cloud Kingdom. This will be a cinch for you. And maybe, if you bring me some fresh scrolls I will do what you asked of me: Reconnect you with you father.'*
Lloyd stared at Fenwick in disbelief, looked to the pirates, then Yana and then Clancee. He let out a spiteful laugh. *'You've got to be kidding! There is no way I will give you that kind of power.*
Fenwick smiled. *'You will come around and make the right choice. I have ways to make you. I have a 'friend' who is eager to meet you. You'll like him. His name is Nimbus and it's been a while since he has been allowed out to play.'*




# CHAPTER 19

***'WH-WH-WHY DID YOU DO THAT!?!?***
Fenwick's one eye seemed to sparkle with glee and evil.
Blood trickled slowly down the icy walls below them. Two bright blue eyes stared blindly up at Lloyd. Nimbus was loudly devouring the lifeless body, and Clancy was in utter shock. He turned to his former crew and cried out with a pain that Lloyd had never heard before.
Dogshank hung her head and replied in a voice which was little more than a whisper ... *'Because we had to. Because it is written. Because it is our destiny to obey the Wishmaster'.*

Moments before they had been marched into a large room, one that had a heavy grating as a floor. Below the mighty Nimbus had been pacing back and forth growling. The floor below was littered with hundreds of bones and Lloyd had been able to make out a few skulls as well. This was an execution pit! The wishmaster had turned to him and repeated his request for him to Arijiztu up trough the passing Blind Man's Eye to retrieve Nobu from Cloud Kingdom.
Lloyd had refused again. He knew how much was at stake if Fenwick would be able to have his own miserable destiny altered. The horribly scarred man had looked back at Lloyd and coldly replied.
*'You misunderstand me. It is not a request. It is a demand! And I know all too well that you will not bend to my will out of concern for your own safety ... which is why I am so happy that you brought your cold-blooded companion with you.'* He gestured towards Clancy.
*'I will give you one chance to do what I demand. No one close to you needs to suffer, but I will demonstrate what I am prepared to do to have my way. Dogshank! Please ...'*
Lloyd watch in disbelief as Dogshank walked over to Yana. Yana looked up at the huge pirate. Concern and horror spread across her face. She looked towards Fenwick and her bright blue eyes pleaded wordlessly.
*'You know very well that your destiny is to serve me, and you have done well. Now I will relieve you of your duty. Goodbye child!'*
Dogshank moved uncharacteristically limb as she grabbed Yana by her shoulders, opened up part of the grated floor and pushed her into the pit. Lloyd yelled out and thrust himself forward to come to her aid, but a bullet from Flintlocke's musket stopped his advance as it buried itself in his left shoulder. Lloyd fell backwards and was spared the grizzly horror of watching Yana's demise. Her screams mixed in with Nimbus' roars forced themselves though the ringing pain and painted vivid imagery inside his mind. And then there was Clancee's painful cry: ***'WH-WH-WHY DID YOU DO THAT!?!?***

***Fenwick smiled.*** 'I just wanted to know that you would have no doubt whatsoever about my resolve. *'And I am not naive. I know much about you Lloyd Montgomery Garmadon. Oni blood runs in your veins, yet there seems to be only the spirit of dragon in your mind. You would never act on threats to your own well being. But those you call friends ... You will do anything for them.'*

He gave Dogshank a slight nod. The hulking pirate walked over and picked up Clancee. There was a sorrowful moment between the two friends as Dogshank again did what she was destined to do. Clancee was pushed to meet his destiny.

***Lloyd moved forward,*** but the pain in his shoulder forced him back again. Clancee rolled out of the way as Nimbus charged at him, narrowly escaping a huge foot as it came crashing down. Bones scattered with a loud clattering. Fenwick looked to Lloyd. It would only be a matter of time.

Clancee backed against a wall and dodged as Nimbus lunged again. Deftly Clancee leapt to safety.

...but.

***Much to Lloyd's surprise Nimbus stopped.*** He stood still. He would have looked lifeless if it wasn't for the blue light pulsing in his chest. It looked like some strange force of nature from some strange far off world.

Lloyd turned to Fenwick who met his stare. He held a quill and a scroll and answered Lloyd's unspoken question.

*'Yes ... beasts too. When I happen to have the scroll which defines their destiny. Now...we have preparations to do. The Blind Man's eye and Cloud Kingdom awaits you.'*